

# LENIN

Articles  
and Speeches  
on Anniversaries  
of the October  
Revolution





*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

V. I. Lenin

**Articles and Speeches  
on Anniversaries of  
the October Revolution**



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## THE CHIEF TASK OF OUR DAY

*Thou art wretched, thou art abundant,  
Thou art mighty, thou art impotent—  
Mother Russia!*

Human history these days is making a momentous and most difficult turn, a turn, one might say without the least exaggeration, of immense significance for the emancipation of the world. A turn from war to peace; a turn from a war between plunderers, who are sending to the shambles millions of the working and exploited people for the sake of establishing a new system of dividing the spoils looted by the strongest of them, to a war of the oppressed against the oppressors for liberation from the yoke of capital; a turn from an abyss of suffering, anguish, starvation and degradation to the bright future of communist society, universal prosperity and enduring peace. No wonder that at the sharpest points of this sharp turn, when all around the old order is breaking down and collapsing with a terrible grinding crash, and the new order is being born amid indescribable suffering, there are some whose heads grow dizzy, some who are seized by despair, some who seek salvation from the at times too bitter reality in fine-sounding and alluring phrases.

It has been Russia's lot to see most clearly, and experience most keenly and painfully the sharpest of sharp turning-points in history as it swings round from imperialism towards the communist revolution. In the space of a few days we destroyed one of the oldest, most powerful, barbarous and brutal of monarchies. In the space of a few months we passed through a number of stages of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and of shaking off petty-bourgeois illusions, for which other countries have required decades. In the course of a few weeks, having overthrown the bourgeoisie, we crushed its open resistance in civil war. We passed in a victorious triumphal

march of Bolshevism from one end of a vast country to the other. We raised the lowest strata of the working people oppressed by tsarism and the bourgeoisie to liberty and independent life. We established and consolidated a Soviet Republic, a new type of state, which is infinitely superior to, and more democratic than, the best of the bourgeois-parliamentary republics. We established the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasantry, and began a broadly conceived system of socialist reforms. We awakened the faith of the millions upon millions of workers of all countries in their own strength and kindled the fires of enthusiasm in them. Everywhere we issued the call for a world workers' revolution. We flung a challenge to the imperialist plunderers of all countries.

Then in a few days we were thrown to the ground by an imperialist plunderer, who fell upon the unarmed. He compelled us to sign an incredibly burdensome and humiliating peace<sup>2</sup>—as tribute for having dared to tear ourselves, even for the shortest space of time, from the iron clutches of an imperialist war. The more ominously the shadow of a workers' revolution in his own country rises before the plunderer, the greater his ferocity in crushing and stifling Russia and tearing her to pieces.

We were compelled to sign a "Tilsit" peace. We need no self-deception. We must courageously look the bitter, unadorned truth straight in the face. We must measure fully, to the very bottom, that abyss of defeat, dismemberment, enslavement, and humiliation into which we have now been pushed. The more clearly we understand this, the firmer, the more steeled and tempered will be our will to liberation, our aspiration to rise again from enslavement to independence, and our unbending determination to ensure that at any price Russia ceases to be wretched and impotent and becomes mighty and abundant in the full meaning of these words.

And mighty and abundant she can become, for, after all, we still have sufficient territory and natural wealth left to us to supply each and all, if not with abundant, at least with adequate means of life. Our natural wealth, our manpower and the splendid impetus which the great revolution has given to the creative powers of the people



are ample material to build a truly mighty and abundant Russia.

Russia will become mighty and abundant if she abandons all dejection and all phrase-making, if, with clenched teeth, she musters all her forces and strains every nerve and muscle, if she realises that salvation lies *only* along that road of world socialist revolution upon which we have set out. March forward along that road, undismayed by defeats, lay the firm foundation of socialist society stone by stone, work with might and main to establish discipline and self-discipline, consolidate everywhere organisation, order, efficiency, the harmonious co-operation of all the forces of the people, and comprehensive accounting of and control over production and distribution—such is the way to build up military might and socialist might.

It would be unworthy of a genuine socialist who has suffered grave defeat either to bluster or to give way to despair. It is not true that our position is hopeless and that all that remains for us is to choose between an "inglorious" death (inglorious from the point of view of the *szlachcic*), such as this harsh peace represents, and a "gallant" death in a hopeless fight. It is not true that by signing a "Tilsit" peace we have betrayed our ideals or our friends. We have betrayed nothing and nobody, we have not sanctified or covered up any lie, we have not refused to help a single friend or comrade in misfortune in every way we could and with everything at our disposal. A general who withdraws the remnants of his army into the heart of the country when it has been beaten or is in panic-stricken flight, or who, in extremity, shields this retreat by a harsh and humiliating peace, is not guilty of treachery towards that part of his army which he is powerless to help and which has been cut off by the enemy. Such a general performs his duty by choosing the only way of saving what can still be saved, by refusing to gamble recklessly, by not embellishing the bitter truth for the people, by "surrendering space in order to gain time", by taking advantage of *any and every* respite, even the briefest, in which to muster his forces and to allow his army to rest or recover, if it is affected by disintegration and demoralisation.

We have signed a "Tilsit" peace. When Napoleon I, in 1807, compelled Prussia to sign the Peace of Tilsit, the conqueror smashed the Germans' entire army, occupied their capital and all their big cities, brought in his own police, compelled the vanquished to supply him, the conqueror, with auxiliary corps for fresh predatory wars, and partitioned Germany, concluding alliances with some German states against others. Nevertheless, the German people survived even *such* a peace, proved able to muster their forces, to rise and to win the right to liberty and independence.

To all those who are able and willing to think, the example of the Peace of Tilsit (which was only one of many harsh and humiliating treaties forced upon the Germans at that period) clearly shows how childishy naïve is the idea that under all conditions a harsh peace means the bottomless pit of ruin, while war is the path of valour and salvation. Periods of war teach us that peace has not infrequently in history served as a respite and a means of mustering forces for new battles. The Peace of Tilsit was a supreme humiliation for Germany, but at the same time it marked a turn towards a supreme national resurgence. At that time historical conditions were such that this resurgence could be channelled only in the direction of a *bourgeois* state. At that time, more than a hundred years ago, history was made by handfuls of nobles and a sprinkling of bourgeois intellectuals, while the worker and peasant masses were somnolent and dormant. As a result history at that time could only crawl along at a terribly slow pace.

But now capitalism has raised culture in general, and the culture of the masses in particular, to a much higher level. War has shaken up the masses, its untold horrors and suffering have awakened them. War has given history momentum and it is now flying with locomotive speed. History is now being independently made by millions and tens of millions of people. Capitalism has now matured for socialism.

Consequently, if Russia is now passing—as she undeniably is—from a "Tilsit" peace to a national resurgence, to a great patriotic war, the outlet for it is not in the direction of a bourgeois state, but in the direction of a

world socialist revolution. Since October 25, 1917, we have been defencists. We are for "defence of the fatherland"; but that patriotic war towards which we are moving is a war for a socialist fatherland, for socialism as a fatherland, for the Soviet Republic as a *contingent* of the world army of socialism.

"Hate the Germans, kill the Germans"—such was, and is, the slogan of common, i. e., bourgeois, patriotism. But we will say "Hate the imperialist plunderers, hate capitalism, death to capitalism" and at the same time "Learn from the Germans! Remain true to the brotherly alliance with the German workers. They are late in coming to our aid. We shall gain time, we shall live to see them coming, and they *will come*, to our aid."

Yes, learn from the Germans! History is moving in zigzags and by roundabout ways. It so happens that it is the Germans who now personify, besides a brutal imperialism, the principle of discipline, organisation, harmonious co-operation on the basis of modern machine industry, and strict accounting and control.

And that is just what we are lacking. That is just what we must learn. That is just what our great revolution needs in order to pass from a triumphant beginning, through a succession of severe trials, to its triumphant goal. That is just what the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic requires in order to cease being wretched and impotent and become mighty and abundant for all time.

March 11, 1918

*Izvestia VTsIK* No. 46,  
March 12, 1918  
Signed: *N. Lenin*

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**SPEECH ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION  
DELIVERED AT THE EXTRAORDINARY SIXTH ALL-RUSSIA  
CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS', PEASANTS', COSSACKS'  
AND RED ARMY DEPUTIES, NOVEMBER 6, 1918**

*(Comrade Lenin's appearance in the hall is greeted with prolonged ovation.)* Comrades, we are celebrating the anniversary of our revolution at a time when events of the utmost importance are taking place in the international working-class movement. It has become obvious even to the most sceptical and doubting elements of the working class and working people in general that the world war will end neither by agreements nor by coercion on the part of the old government and the old ruling bourgeois class, that this war is leading the whole world as well as Russia to a world proletarian revolution and to the workers' triumph over capital. Capital drenched the earth in blood, and, after the violence and outrages of German imperialism, Anglo-French imperialism, supported by Austria and Germany, is pursuing the same policy.

Today, when celebrating the anniversary of the revolution, it is fitting that we cast a glance back along the path traversed by the revolution. We began our revolution in unusually difficult conditions, such as no other workers' revolution in the world will ever have to face. It is therefore particularly important that we endeavour to review the path we have covered as a whole, to take stock of our achievements during this period, and see to what extent we have prepared ourselves during the past year for our chief, our real, our decisive and fundamental task. We must be one of the detachments, one of the units of the world proletarian and socialist army. We have always realised that it was not on account of any merit of the Russian proletariat, or because it was in advance of the others, that we happened to begin the revolution, which grew out of world-wide struggle. On the contrary, it was only because of the peculiar weakness and back-

wardness of capitalism, and the peculiar pressure of military strategic circumstances, that we happened in the course of events to move ahead of the other detachments, while not waiting until they had caught us up and rebelled. We are now making this review so as to take stock of our preparations for the battles that will face us in the coming revolution.

And so, comrades, when we ask ourselves what big changes we have made over the past year, we can say the following: from workers' control, the working class's first steps, and from disposing of all the country's resources, we are now on the threshold of creating a workers' administration of industry; from the general peasants' struggle for land, the peasants' struggle against the landowners, a struggle that had a national, bourgeois-democratic character, we have now reached a stage where the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements in the countryside have set themselves apart: those who labour and are exploited have set themselves apart from the others and have begun to build a new life; the most oppressed country folk are fighting the bourgeoisie, including their own rural kulak bourgeoisie, to the bitter end.

Furthermore, from the first steps of Soviet organisation we have now reached a stage where, as Comrade Sverdlov justly remarked in opening this Congress, there is no place in Russia, however remote, where Soviet authority has not asserted itself and become an integral part of the Soviet Constitution, which is based on long experience gained in the struggle of the working and oppressed people.

We now have a powerful Red Army instead of being utterly defenceless after the last four years' war, which evoked hatred and aversion among the mass of the exploited and left them terribly weak and exhausted, and which condemned the revolution to a most difficult and drastic period when we were defenceless against the blows of German and Austrian imperialism. Finally, and most important of all, we have come from being isolated internationally, from which we suffered both in October and at the beginning of the year, to a position where our only, but firm allies, the working and oppressed people of the world, have at last rebelled. We have reached a stage

where the leaders of the West European proletariat, like Liebknecht and Adler, leaders who spent many months in prison for their bold and heroic attempts to gather opposition to the imperialist war, have been set free under the pressure of the rapidly developing workers' revolutions in Vienna and Berlin. Instead of being isolated, we are now in a position where we are marching side by side, shoulder to shoulder with our international allies. Those are the chief achievements of the past year. I want to say a few words about the road we have covered, about this transitional stage.

At first our slogan was workers' control. We said that despite all the promises of the Kerensky government, the capitalists were continuing to sabotage production and increase dislocation. We can now see that this would have ended in complete collapse. So the first fundamental step that every socialist, workers' government has to take is workers' control. We did not decree socialism immediately throughout industry, because socialism can only take shape and be consolidated when the working class has learnt how to run the economy and when the authority of the working people has been firmly established. Socialism is mere wishful thinking without that. That is why we introduced workers' control, appreciating that it was a contradictory and incomplete measure, but an essential one so that the workers themselves might tackle the momentous tasks of building up industry in a vast country without and opposed to exploiters.

Everyone who took a direct, or even indirect, part in this work, everyone who lived through all the oppression and brutality of the old capitalist regime, learned a great deal. We know that little has been accomplished. We know that in this extremely backward and impoverished country where innumerable obstacles and barriers were put in the workers' way, it will take them a long time to learn to run industry. But we consider it most important and valuable that the workers have themselves tackled the job, and that we have passed from workers' control, which in all the main branches of industry was bound to be chaotic, disorganised, primitive and incomplete, to workers' industrial administration on a national scale.

The trade unions' position has altered. Their main func-

tion now is to send their representatives to all management boards and central bodies, to all the new organisations which have taken over a ruined and deliberately sabotaged industry from capitalism. They have coped with industry without the assistance of those intellectuals who from the very outset deliberately used their knowledge and education—the result of mankind's store of knowledge—to frustrate the cause of socialism, rather than assist the people in building up a socially-owned economy without exploiters. These men wanted to use their knowledge to put a spoke in the wheel, to hamper the workers who were least trained for tackling the job of administration.

We can now say that the main hindrance has been removed. It was extremely difficult, but the sabotage of all people gravitating towards the bourgeoisie has been checked. The workers have succeeded in taking this basic step, in laying the foundations of socialism, despite tremendous handicaps. We are not exaggerating and are not afraid to tell the truth. It is true that in terms of our ultimate goal, little has been accomplished. But a great deal, a very great deal, has been done to strengthen the foundations. When speaking of socialism, we cannot say that great sections of workers have laid the foundations in a politically-conscious way in the sense that they have taken to reading books and pamphlets. By political consciousness we mean that they have tackled this formidable task with their own hands and by their own efforts. And they have committed thousands of blunders from each of which they have themselves suffered. But every blunder trained and steeled them in organising industrial administration, which has now been established and put upon a firm foundation. They saw their work through. From now on the work will be different, for now all workers, not just the leaders and advanced workers, but great sections of workers, know that they themselves, with their own hands, are building socialism and have already laid its foundations, and no force in the country can prevent them from seeing the job through.

We may have had great difficulties in industry, where we had to cover a road which to many seemed long, but which was actually short and led from workers' control

to workers' administration, yet far greater preparatory work had to be done in the more backward countryside. Anyone who has studied rural life and come into contact with the peasants would say that it was only in the summer and autumn of 1918 that the urban October Revolution became a real rural October Revolution. And the Petrograd workers and the Petrograd garrison soldiers fully realised when they took power that great difficulties would crop up in rural organisational work, and our progress there would have to be more gradual and that it would be the greatest folly to try to introduce socialised farming by decree, for only an insignificant number of enlightened peasants might support us, while the vast majority had no such object in view. We therefore confined ourselves to what was absolutely essential in the interests of promoting the revolution—in no case to endeavour to outrun the people's development, but to wait until a movement forward occurred as a result of their own experience and their own struggle. In October we confined ourselves to sweeping away at one blow the age-old enemy of the peasants, the feudal landowner, the big landed proprietor. This was a struggle in which all the peasants joined. At this stage the peasants were not yet divided into proletarians, semi-proletarians, poor peasants and bourgeoisie. We socialists knew there would be no socialism without such a struggle, but we also realised that knowing it was not enough—it had to be brought home to the millions, and through their own experience, not through propaganda. And for that reason, since the peasants as a whole could only conceive of the revolution on the basis of equal land tenure, we openly declared in our decree of October 26, 1917, that we would take the Peasants' Mandate on the Land<sup>3</sup> as our starting-point.

We said frankly that it did not accord with our views, that it was not communism, but we were not imposing on the peasants something that was merely in accord with our programme and not with their views. We said we were marching alongside them, as with fellow-workers, fully confident that the development of the revolution would lead them to the conclusions we ourselves had drawn. The result of this policy is the peasant movement. The agrarian reform began with the socialisation of the



land which we voted for and carried out, though openly declaring that it did not accord with our views. We knew that the idea of equal land tenure had the support of the vast majority, and we had no desire to force anything upon them. We were prepared to wait until the peasants themselves abandoned the idea and advanced further. So we waited and we have been able to prepare our forces.

The law we then passed was based on general democratic principles, on that which unites the rich kulak peasant with the poor peasant—hatred for the landowner. It was based on the general idea of equality which was undoubtedly a revolutionary idea directed against the old monarchist system. From this law we had to pass to differentiation of the peasants. The land socialisation law was universally accepted; it was unanimously adopted both by us and by those who did not subscribe to Bolshevik policy. We gave the agricultural communes the biggest say in deciding who should own the land. We left the road open for agriculture to develop along socialist lines, knowing perfectly well that at that time, October 1917, it was not yet ready for it. Our preparatory work cleared the way for the gigantic and epoch-making step we have now taken, one that has not been taken by any other country, not even by the most democratic republic. That step was taken this summer by all the peasants, even in the most remote villages of Russia. When food difficulties arose and famine threatened, when the heritage of the past and the aftermath of the accursed four years of war made themselves felt, when counter-revolution and the Civil War had deprived us of our richest grain region, when all this reached a climax and the cities were menaced by famine, the only, the most reliable and firm bulwark of our government, the advanced workers of the towns and industrial regions, went en masse to the countryside. It is slander to say the workers went there to provoke an armed conflict between workers and peasants. Events expose that slander. The workers went to put down the rural exploiters, the kulaks, who were making huge fortunes out of grain profiteering at a time when people were starving. They went to help the poor peasants, that is, the majority of the rural population. The July crisis, when kulak revolts swept the whole of Russia, clearly

showed that their mission had not been in vain, that they had extended the hand of alliance, and that their preparatory work had merged with the efforts of the peasants. The working and exploited country people settled the July crisis by rising up everywhere and coming out in alliance with the urban proletariat. Today Comrade Zinoviev told me over the telephone that 18,000 people are attending the regional congress of Poor Peasants' Committees<sup>4</sup> in Petrograd and that there is remarkable enthusiasm and high spirits.

As events unfolding throughout Russia became more evident, the village poor realised from their own experience when they went into action what the struggle against the kulaks meant, and that to keep the cities supplied with food and to re-establish commodity exchange, without which the countryside cannot live, they must part company with the rural bourgeoisie and the kulaks. They have to organise separately. And we have now taken the first and most momentous step of the socialist revolution in the countryside. We could not have taken that step in October. We gauged the moment when we could approach the people. And we have now reached a point where the socialist revolution in the rural areas has begun, where in every village, even the most remote, the peasant knows that his rich neighbour, the kulak, if he is engaged in grain profiteering, sees everything in the light of his old, backwoods mentality.

And so the countryside, the rural poor, uniting with their leaders, the city workers, are only now providing us with a firm and stable foundation for real socialist construction. Socialist construction will only now begin in the countryside. Only now are Soviets and farms being formed which are systematically working towards large-scale socialised farming, towards making full use of knowledge, science and technology, realising that even simple, elementary human culture cannot be based on the old, reactionary, ignorant way of life. The work here is even more difficult than in industry, and even more mistakes are being made by our local committees and Soviets. But they learn from their mistakes. We are not afraid of mistakes when they are made by ordinary people who take a conscientious attitude to socialist construction,

because we rely only on the experience and effort of our own people.

And now the tremendous upheaval that in so short a time has led us to socialism in the countryside shows that this fight has been crowned with success. The Red Army is the most striking proof of that. You know the state we were in during the imperialist world war when conditions in Russia made life unbearable for the common people. We know that at that time we were in an utterly helpless state. We frankly told the working people the whole truth. We exposed the secret imperialist treaties, the fruits of a policy which serves as a massive instrument of deception, and which in America today, the most advanced of the bourgeois imperialist democratic republics, is more than ever deceiving the people and leading them by the nose. When the imperialist character of the war became patent to all, the Russian Soviet Republic was the only country that completely shattered the bourgeoisie's secret foreign policy. We exposed the secret treaties and declared, through Comrade Trotsky, to all countries of the world: We appeal to you to put an end to this war in a democratic way, without annexations and indemnities, and frankly and proudly declare the truth, a bitter truth but the truth nevertheless, that only a revolution against the bourgeois governments can put an end to this war. But we stood alone. So we had to pay the price of that terribly excruciating peace which was forced upon us by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and which drove many of our sympathisers to gloom and despair. That was because we were alone. But we did our duty and showed up the aims of the war for everyone to see! The onslaught of German imperialism was able to overwhelm us because it took some time before our workers and peasants could organise properly. We had no army then; all we had was the old, disorganised, imperialist army which had been driven to fight in the war for aims which the soldiers did not support and with which they did not sympathise. So we had to go through a very painful period. It was a time when the people needed a respite from the terrible imperialist war, and had to realise that a new war was beginning. We are entitled to regard the war we shall wage in defence of our socialist revolution as our war. That is

what millions and tens of millions of people had to learn to appreciate from their own experience. It took months. It took a long and hard battle for this realisation to get through. By this summer, however, everyone saw that it had got through at last, and that the breakthrough had come. Everyone realised that to have the army fight for the Soviet Republic, the army that comes from the people, that is sacrificing itself, and that after four years of bloody slaughter is again prepared to go to war, our country had to replace the weariness and despair of the people going to war by a clear realisation that they go to their death for their own cause: for the workers' and peasants' Soviets and the socialist republic. That has been achieved.

The victories we gained over the Czechs<sup>5</sup> in the summer, and the news of big victories now coming in go to show that a turning-point has come, and that the hardest task—organising the people in a politically-conscious, socialist way after four years of terrible war—has been achieved. That political consciousness has penetrated a long way among the people. Tens of millions of people have come to realise they are tackling a difficult job. And that gives us assurance that we shall not despair, even though the forces of world imperialism, stronger than us today, are being mustered against us, even though we are surrounded by the soldiers of the imperialists, who realise that the Soviet government is a danger and are eager to strangle it, and even though we truthfully say they are stronger than us.

We say we are growing, the Soviet Republic is growing. The cause of the proletarian revolution is growing faster than the imperialist forces are closing in upon us. We are full of hope and assurance that we are fighting in the interests of the world socialist revolution as well as the Russian socialist revolution. Our hopes of victory are growing faster because our workers are becoming more politically-conscious. What was the state of Soviet organisation last October? Only the first steps were being taken. We could not make it perfect or put it on a proper basis. But now we have the Soviet Constitution. The Soviet Constitution, ratified in July, is, as we know, not the invention of a commission, nor the creation of lawyers, nor is it

copied from other constitutions. The world has never known such a constitution as ours. It embodies the workers' experience of struggle and organisation against the exploiters both at home and abroad. We possess a fund of fighting experience. (*Applause.*) And this fund of experience has provided a striking corroboration of the fact that the organised workers created a Soviet government without civil servants, without a standing army and without privileges (privileges in practice for the bourgeoisie), and that they created the foundations of a new system in the factories. We are getting down to work and drawing in new helpers, who are essential if the Soviet Constitution is to be carried into effect. We now have ready new recruits, young peasants, who must be drawn into the work and help us carry the job through.

The last question I want to touch upon is the international situation. We are standing shoulder to shoulder with our international comrades, and we have now seen for ourselves the resoluteness and enthusiasm they put into their conviction that the Russian proletarian revolution will go along with them as the world revolution.

As the revolution's international significance grew, the imperialists of the whole world banded even closer and more furiously together against us. In October 1917 they regarded our Republic as a curiosity not worth serious attention. In February they regarded it as an experiment in socialism not to be taken seriously. But the Republic's army grew and gained in strength until the very difficult task of creating a socialist Red Army had been accomplished. As our cause gained in strength and its successes multiplied, the opposition and the hatred of the imperialists of all countries grew more rabid. Things have reached a state where British and French capitalists, who had proclaimed they were Wilhelm's enemies, are now on the verge of joining forces with this same Wilhelm in an effort to strangle the Socialist Soviet Republic. For they have come to realise that it is no longer a curiosity or an experiment in socialism, but the hotbed, the really genuine hotbed, of the world socialist revolution. Hence, the number of our enemies has increased along with the successes of our revolution. We must realise what is lying in store for us, without

in any way concealing the gravity of the situation. We shall go to meet it not alone but with the workers of Vienna and Berlin, who are moving into the same fight, and who will perhaps bring greater discipline and class-consciousness to our common cause.

To give you an idea of how the clouds are gathering over our Soviet Republic and what dangers are threatening us, I shall read you the full text of a Note sent to us by the German Government through its consulate:

"G. V. Chicherin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Moscow, November 5, 1918.

On the instructions of the German Imperial Government, the Imperial German Consulate has the honour to notify the Russian Federative Soviet Republic of the following: The German Government has already had occasion to protest twice against the impermissible campaign that is being conducted against German state institutions through declarations made by official Russian authorities in contravention of Article 2 of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. It can no longer confine itself to protests against this campaign, which is not only a violation of the said stipulations of the Treaty, but a serious departure from normal international practice.

When the Soviet Government established its Diplomatic Legation in Berlin after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty, Herr Joffe, the appointed Russian representative, received a clear reminder of the need to refrain from any agitation or propaganda in Germany. To this he replied that he was acquainted with Article 2 of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and was aware that in his capacity as representative of a foreign Power he must not interfere in Germany's internal affairs. Herr Joffe and the departments in his charge accordingly enjoyed in Berlin the attention and confidence normally accorded to extraterritorial foreign legations. This confidence was, however, betrayed. It has been clear for some time that the Russian Legation has been in close contact with certain people working for the overthrow of the political order in Germany, and, by employing such people in its service, has been interested in a movement aimed at overthrowing the existing system in Germany.

The following incident, which occurred on the 4th instant, revealed that the Russian Legation, by importing leaflets calling for revolution, is even taking an active part in movements aimed at overthrowing the existing order, thereby abusing the privilege of employing diplomatic couriers. Because one of the boxes in the official baggage of the Russian courier who arrived in Berlin yesterday was damaged during transportation, it was ascertained that the boxes contained revolutionary leaflets printed in German and, judging by their contents, designed for dissemination in Germany.

The German Government has further grounds for complaint because of the attitude taken by the Soviet Government towards the expiation to be made for the assassination of Count Mirbach, the Imperial Ambassador. The Russian Government solemnly declared that it would

do everything in its power to bring the criminals to court. But the German Government has not observed any signs of the prosecution and punishment of the criminals having been undertaken, or even of any intention of it being done. The murderers escaped from a house surrounded on all sides by Public Security men of the Russian Government. The instigators of the assassination, who have publicly admitted they were behind the whole affair, to this day go unpunished and, according to information received, have even been pardoned.

The German Government protests against such violations of the Treaty and of public law. It is obliged to demand guarantees from the Russian Government that no further agitation and propaganda running counter to the Peace Treaty will be conducted. It must furthermore insist on the expiation of the assassination of the Ambassador, Count Mirbach, by the punishment of the perpetrators and instigators of the murder. Until such time as these demands are satisfied, the German Government must request the Government of the Soviet Republic to withdraw its diplomatic and other representatives from Germany. The Russian plenipotentiary in Berlin was today informed that a special train for the departure of the diplomatic and consular representatives in Berlin and of other Russian officials in the city will be ready tomorrow evening, and that measures will be taken to secure the unhampered transit of all Russian personnel to the Russian frontier. The Soviet Government is requested to enable the German representatives in Moscow and Petrograd to leave at the same time, with the observance of all the demands of courtesy. Other Russian representatives in Germany, and likewise German officials in other parts of Russia, will be informed they must leave within a week, the former for Russia, the latter for Germany. The German Government concludes in anticipation that all the rules of courtesy will be similarly observed towards the latter German officials in relation to their departure and that other German subjects or persons under German protection will be allowed the opportunity of unhampered departure should they request it."

We all know perfectly well, comrades, that the German Government has been fully aware that German socialists enjoyed the hospitality of the Russian Embassy and that no supporters of German imperialism ever crossed the threshold of the Russian Embassy. Its friends were those socialists who opposed the war and who sympathised with Karl Liebknecht. They have been guests of the Embassy ever since it opened, and we have had dealings with them alone. The German Government was perfectly aware of that. It followed the movements of every representative of our government as zealously as the government of Nicholas II used to follow the movements of our comrades. The German Government is now making this move not because the situation has in any way changed, but because it formerly felt stronger, and was not afraid that one "burning" house on the streets of Berlin would

set all Germany alight. The German Government has lost its head, and now that the whole of Germany is ablaze, it thinks it can put out the fire by turning its police hose on a single house. (*Stormy applause.*)

That is simply ridiculous. If the German Government is going to break off diplomatic relations, all we can say is that we knew it would, and that it is doing all it can to get an alliance with the British and French imperialists. We know Wilson's government has received telegram after telegram requesting that German troops be left in Poland, the Ukraine, Estonia and Latvia. Although they are enemies of German imperialism, the German troops are doing their job: they are putting down the Bolsheviks. They can clear out when pro-Entente "armies of liberation" appear on the scene to strangle the Bolsheviks.

We are perfectly aware of what is going on and none of it is unexpected. We merely repeat that now that Germany is on fire and Austria is all ablaze, now that they have had to liberate Liebknecht and allow him to visit the Russian Embassy, where a joint meeting of Russian and German socialists with Liebknecht at their head was held, such a step on the part of the German Government shows not so much that they want to fight as that they have completely lost their heads. It shows they are at a loss for a decision because Anglo-American imperialism, the most brutal enemy of all, is advancing upon them, an enemy that has crushed Austria with peace terms a hundred times more onerous than those of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty. Germany sees that these liberators want to strangle, crush and torture her too. But at the same time the workingman's Germany is rebelling. The German army proved to be useless and unfit for action not because discipline was weak but because the soldiers who refused to fight were transferred from the Eastern front to the German Western front and carried with them what the bourgeoisie call world Bolshevism.

That is why the German army was unfit for action and why this document is the best proof of Germany's utter confusion. We say it will lead to a diplomatic rupture, and perhaps even to war if they can find the strength to lead the whiteguard troops. We have therefore sent a telegram to all the Soviets of Deputies<sup>6</sup>, which con-



cludes by warning them to be on their guard, to hold themselves in readiness and muster all their forces, for this is just another sign that the chief aim of international imperialism is the overthrow of Bolshevism. That does not mean defeating Russia alone. It means defeating their own workers in every country. But they will not succeed, no matter what brutalities and outrages may follow this decision. These vultures are preparing to swoop down on Russia from the South, through the Dardanelles, or by way of Bulgaria and Rumania. They are negotiating for the formation of a White army in Germany to be pitted against Russia. We are fully aware of this danger, and say quite plainly that we have not worked a year for nothing; we have laid the foundations, we are coming up to decisive battles, battles which will indeed be decisive. But we are not alone: the proletariat of Western Europe has gone into action and has not left anything standing in Austria-Hungary. The government of the country is just about as helpless, as wildly confused, has lost its head as completely as Nicholas Romanov's government at the end of February 1917. Our slogan must be: Put every effort into the fight once more, and remember that we are coming up to the last, decisive fight, not for the Russian revolution alone, but for the world socialist revolution!

We know that the imperialist vultures are still stronger than us. They can still inflict wholesale damage, brutalities and atrocities upon our country. But they cannot defeat the world revolution. They are full of savage hatred, so we tell ourselves that come what may, every Russian worker and peasant will do his duty and will face death if the interests of defence of the revolution demand it. No matter what miseries the imperialists may still inflict upon us, it will not save them. Imperialism will perish and the world socialist revolution will triumph in face of all odds! (*Stormy applause passing into prolonged ovation.*)

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Moscow

## WHAT IS SOVIET POWER?

### (A Speech on a Gramophone Record)

What is Soviet power? What is the essence of this new power, which people in most countries still will not, or cannot, understand? The nature of this power, which is attracting larger and larger numbers of workers in every country, is the following: in the past the country was, in one way or another, governed by the rich, or by the capitalists, but now, for the first time, the country is being governed by the classes, and moreover, by the masses of those classes, which capitalism formerly oppressed. Even in the most democratic and freest republics, as long as capital rules and the land remains private property, the government will always be in the hands of a small minority, nine-tenths of which consist of capitalists, or rich men.

In this country, in Russia, for the first time in the world history, the government of the country is so organised that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters, constitute those mass organisations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power. That is why, in spite of the slander that the representatives of the bourgeoisie in all countries spread about Russia, the word "Soviet" has now become not only intelligible but popular all over the world, has become the favourite word of the workers, and of all working people. And that is why, notwithstanding all the persecution to which the adherents of communism in the different countries are subjected, Soviet power must necessarily, inevitably, and in the not distant future, triumph all over the world.

We know very well that there are still many defects in the organisation of Soviet power in this country. Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does

not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past—illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.

Soviet power is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible.

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*Collected Works*, Vol. 29,  
pp. 248-49

## SOVIET POWER AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The second anniversary of Soviet power is an occasion for taking stock of what has been done during this period and for reflecting on the significance and the aims of the revolution that has been accomplished.

The bourgeoisie and its supporters charge us with having violated democracy. We, on the other hand, assert that the Soviet revolution has given an unprecedented impulse to the development of democracy in breadth and in depth, democracy, that is, for the working people oppressed by capitalism, democracy for the overwhelming majority of the people, socialist democracy (for the working people), as distinct from bourgeois democracy (for the exploiters, for the capitalists, for the rich).

Who is right?

To give proper thought to this question and achieve a deeper understanding of it one must take stock of the experience of these two years and make better preparations for further development.

The status of women makes clear in the most striking fashion the difference between bourgeois and socialist democracy and furnishes a most effective reply to the question posed.

In a bourgeois republic (i.e., where there is private ownership of land, factories, shares, etc.), be it the most democratic republic, women have never had rights fully equal to those of men, *anywhere in the world, in any one of the more advanced countries*. And this despite the fact that more than 125 years have passed since the great French (bourgeois-democratic) Revolution.

In words bourgeois democracy promises equality and freedom, but in practice *not a single* bourgeois republic, even the more advanced, has granted women (half the

human race) and men complete equality in the eyes of the law, or delivered women from dependence on and the oppression of the male.

Bourgeois democracy is the democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, lavish promises and high-sounding slogans about *freedom and equality*, but in practice all this cloaks the lack of freedom and the inequality of women, the lack of freedom and the inequality for the working and exploited people.

Soviet or socialist democracy sweeps away these pompous but false words and declares ruthless war on the hypocrisy of "democrats", landowners, capitalists and farmers with bursting bins who are piling up wealth by selling surplus grain to the starving workers at profiteering prices.

Down with this foul lie! There is no "equality", nor can there be, of oppressed and oppressor, exploited and exploiter. There is no real "freedom", nor can there be, so long as women are handicapped by men's legal privileges, so long as there is no freedom for the worker from the yoke of capital, no freedom for the labouring peasant from the yoke of the capitalist, landowner and merchant.

Let the liars and the hypocrites, the obtuse and the blind, the bourgeois and their supporters, try to deceive the people with talk about freedom in general, about equality in general and about democracy in general.

We say to the workers and peasants—tear the mask from these liars, open the eyes of the blind. Ask them:

Is there equality of the two sexes?

Which nation is the equal of which?

*Which class is the equal of which?*

Freedom from what yoke or from the yoke of which class? Freedom for which class?

He who speaks about politics, democracy and freedom, about equality, about socialism, *without posing* these questions, without giving them priority, who does not fight against hushing them up, concealing and blunting them, is the worst enemy of the working people, a wolf in sheep's clothing, the rabid opponent of the workers and peasants, a lackey of the landowners, the tsars and the capitalists.

In the course of two years of Soviet power in one of the most backward countries of Europe more has been done to emancipate woman, to make her the equal of the "strong" sex, than has been done during the past 130 years by all the advanced, enlightened, "democratic" republics of the world taken together.

Education, culture, civilisation, freedom—all these high-sounding words are accompanied in all the capitalist, bourgeois republics of the world with incredibly foul, disgustingly vile, bestially crude laws that make women unequal in marriage and divorce, that make the child born out of wedlock and the "legally born" child unequal and that give privileges to the male and humiliate and degrade womankind.

The yoke of capital, the oppression of "sacred private property", the despotism of philistine obtuseness, the avarice of the small property-owner—these are the things that have prevented the most democratic bourgeois republics from abolishing these foul and filthy laws.

The Soviet Republic, the republic of workers and peasants, wiped out these laws at one stroke and did not leave standing a single stone of the edifice of bourgeois lies and bourgeois hypocrisy.

Down with this lie! Down with the liars who speak about freedom and equality *for all*, while there is an oppressed sex, oppressing classes, private ownership of capital and shares and people with bursting bins who use their surplus grain to enslave the hungry. Instead of freedom for all, instead of equality for all, let there be *struggle* against the oppressors and exploiters, *let the opportunity* to oppress and exploit *be abolished*. That is our slogan!

Freedom and equality for the oppressed sex!

Freedom and equality for the workers and labouring peasants!

Struggle against the oppressors, struggle against the capitalists, struggle against the kulak profiteers!

This is our fighting slogan, this is our proletarian truth, the truth of the fight against capital, the truth that we hurl in the face of the world of capital with its honeyed, hypocritical and pompous phrases about freedom and equality *in general*, about freedom and equality *for all*.

And it is because we have laid bare this hypocrisy, because, with revolutionary vigour, we are ensuring freedom and full rights for the oppressed working people,—against the oppressors, against the capitalists, against the kulaks—precisely because of this Soviet rule has become so dear to the workers of the whole world.

It is because of this, the sympathies of the working masses, the sympathies of the oppressed and exploited in all countries of the world are with us on this occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet rule.

Because of this, on the occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet rule, despite the famine and cold, despite all the suffering caused by the imperialists' invasion of the Russian Soviet Republic, we are fully convinced of the justness of our cause, firmly convinced of the inevitable victory of Soviet power on a world scale.

*Pravda* No. 249,  
November 6, 1919

Signed: *N. Lenin*

*Collected Works*, Vol. 30,  
pp. 120-23

## TWO YEARS OF SOVIET POWER

The newspaper *Bednota*<sup>7</sup> is read mostly by peasants. On this, the second, anniversary of the establishment of Soviet power, I wish to extend greetings to the many millions of working peasants who have been liberated from landowner and capitalist oppression and say a few words about that liberation.

Soviet power, which overthrew the rule of capital and placed power in the hands of the working people, has to contend in Russia with unparalleled and incredible difficulties.

The landowners and capitalists of Russia, now joined by the landowners and capitalists of the whole world, are still making frenzied attempts to destroy Soviet power. They fear the example it has set; they fear that it will win the sympathy and support of workers the world over.

Conspiracies within the country, the bribing of the Czechoslovak forces, the landing of foreign troops in Siberia, Archangel, the Caucasus, South Russia and near Petrograd, the hundreds of millions of rubles being spent to help Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and other tsarist generals—every conceivable method is being employed by the capitalists of all countries, who have accumulated millions and thousands of millions from war contracts, in an attempt to overthrow the Soviet government.

But all in vain. The Soviet government stands firm, overcoming all these unparalleled and incredible difficulties, despite the measureless suffering caused by war, blockade, famine, shortages, break-down of the transport system and general economic dislocation.

*Soviet power in Russia has already won the support of the workers of the whole world.* There is not a single



country where the people do not talk of Bolshevism and Soviet power.

The capitalists talk of it with hatred and rabid malice, slandering and vilifying it without end. But this malice gives them away, and the mass of workers are turning their backs on the old leaders and coming out in support of Soviet power.

Despite the crushing, painful burden imposed by the enemy assault on Russia, Soviet power has triumphed throughout the world—triumphed in the sense that everywhere the sympathy of the working people is already on our side.

*The victory of Soviet power throughout the world is assured. It is only a question of time.*

Why is Soviet power so firm and stable, despite the incredible ordeals, the terrible famine and the difficulties created by war and economic dislocation?

Because it is the power of the working people themselves, of the millions of workers and peasants.

The workers hold state power. The workers help the millions of labouring peasants.

The Soviet government has overthrown the landowners and capitalists and is steadfastly defending the people against attempts to restore their rule.

*The Soviet government gives all the aid it is capable of to the labouring peasants, the poor and middle peasants, who make up the vast majority.*

The Soviet government holds a tight rein on the kulak, the village money-bag, the proprietor, the profiteer, on everyone who wants to get rich without having to work, everyone who battens on the misery and hunger of the people.

The Soviet government is *for* the labouring people, *against* the profiteers, proprietors, capitalists and landowners.

That is the source of the strength, stability and invincibility of Soviet power throughout the world.

Tens and hundreds of millions of workers and peasants all over the world are suffering oppression, humiliation and plunder at the hands of landowners and capitalists. The old state apparatus, whether of a monarchy or a

“democratic” (pseudo-democratic) republic, helps the exploiters and oppresses the workers.

Tens and hundreds of millions of workers and peasants in all lands know this; they see it and experience it in their everyday life.

The imperialist war lasted over four years; tens of millions were killed and crippled. What for? For the division of the capitalists’ spoils, for markets, profits, colonies and the power of the banks.

The Anglo-French imperialist predators defeated the German imperialist predators. With every passing day they are exposing themselves for what they are—robbers and plunderers, oppressors of the working folk who batten on the misery of the people and tyrannise weak nations.

That is why support for Soviet power is growing among the workers and peasants of the world.

The severe and arduous struggle against capital was victoriously begun in Russia. It is now spreading in all countries.

*It will end in the victory of the World Soviet Republic.*

Bednota No. 478,  
November 7, 1919  
Signed: *Lenin*

*Collected Works*, Vol. 30,  
pp. 124-26

**SPEECH AT A JOINT SESSION  
OF THE ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
THE MOSCOW SOVIET OF WORKERS' AND RED ARMY  
DEPUTIES,  
THE ALL-RUSSIA CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS,  
AND FACTORY COMMITTEES, ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER  
REVOLUTION, NOVEMBER 7, 1919**

Comrades, two years ago, when the imperialist war was still raging, it seemed to all the supporters of the bourgeoisie in Russia, to the masses of the people and, I dare say, to most of the workers in other countries, that the uprising of the Russian proletariat and their conquest of political power was a bold but hopeless enterprise. At that time world imperialism appeared such a tremendous and invincible force that it seemed stupid of the workers of a backward country to attempt to revolt against it. Now, however, as we glance back over the past two years, we see that even our opponents are increasingly admitting that we were right. We see that imperialism, which seemed such an insuperable colossus, has proved before the whole world to be a colossus with feet of clay, and the two years through which we have passed and during which we have had to fight, mark with ever-growing clarity the victory not only of the Russian, but also of the international proletariat.

Comrades, during the first year of the existence of Soviet power we had to experience the might of German imperialism, to suffer the coercive and predatory peace that was forced on us; we were alone in issuing our call to revolution, and met with no support or response. The first year of our rule was also the first year of our struggle against imperialism, and we soon became convinced that the struggle of the different parts of this gigantic international imperialism was nothing but its death throes, and that both German imperialism and the imperialism of the Anglo-French bourgeoisie had an interest in this struggle. During that year we established that this struggle only strengthened, only increased and restored our forces and enabled us to direct them against

imperialism as a whole. We created such a situation during the first year but, during the whole of the second year, we stood face to face with our enemy. There were pessimists who even last year severely attacked us; even last year they said that Britain, France and America were such a huge, such a colossal force that they would crush our country. The year has passed, and as you see, while the first year may be called that of the might of international imperialism, the second year will be called that of the onslaught of Angla-American imperialism and of victory over that onslaught, of victory over Kolchak and Yudenich, and the beginning of victory over Denikin.

Now we know perfectly well that all the military forces sent against us have been directed from a definite source. We know that the imperialists have given them all the military supplies, all the arms needed; we know that they have handed over their global navies in part to our enemies, and now are doing all they can to help and build up forces both in the south of Russia and in Archangel. But we know perfectly well that all these seemingly huge and invincible forces of international imperialism are unreliable, and hold no terrors for us, that at the core they are rotten, that they are making us stronger and stronger, and that this added strength will enable us to win victory on the external front and to make it a thorough-going one. I shall not dwell on this point as it will be dealt with by Comrade Trotsky.

It seems to me that we must now try to draw general lessons from the two years of heroic constructive work.

What, in my opinion, is the most important conclusion to be drawn from the two years of developing the Soviet Republic, what, in my view, is most important for us, is the lesson we have had in organising working-class power. It seems to me that in this we must not confine ourselves to the various concrete facts that concern the work of some commissariat and which most of you know of from your own experience. It seems to me that, in glancing back over what we have gone through, we must draw a general lesson from this work of construction, a lesson that we shall learn and carry further afield among working people. The lesson is that only workers'

participation in the general administration of the state has enabled us to hold out amidst such incredible difficulties, and that only by following this path shall we achieve complete victory. Another lesson to be drawn is that we must maintain the right attitude to the peasantry, to the many millions of peasants, for that attitude alone has made it possible for us to carry on successfully amid all our difficulties, and it alone shows us the path along which we are achieving one success after another.

If you recall the past, if you recall the first steps of Soviet power, if you recall the entire work of developing all branches of the administration of the Republic, not excluding the military branch, you will see that the establishment of working-class rule two years ago, in October, was only the beginning. Actually, at that time, the machinery of state power was not yet in our hands, and if you glance back over the two years that have since elapsed you will agree with me that in each sphere—military, political and economic—we have had to win every position inch by inch, in order to establish real machinery of state power, sweeping aside those who before us had been at the head of the industrial workers and working people in general.

It is particularly important for us to understand the development that has taken place in this period, because there is development along the same lines all over the world. The industrial workers and other working people do not take their first steps with their real leaders; the proletariat themselves are now taking over the administration of state, political power, and at their head we see everywhere leaders who are destroying the old prejudices of petty-bourgeois democracy, old prejudices the vehicles of which in our country are the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and throughout Europe are the representatives of bourgeois governments. Previously this was an exception, now it has become the general rule. Two years ago, in October, the bourgeois government in Russia—their alliance or coalition with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries—was smashed, but we know how, in carrying on our work, we had subsequently to reorganise every branch of administration in such a way that genuine representatives, revolutionary workers, the

vanguard of the proletariat, really took in hand the organisation of state power. That was in October, two years ago, when the work went on at terrific pressure; nevertheless we know, and we must say it, that this work is not finished even now. We know how those who formerly ran the state resisted us, how officials at first tried refusing to administrate, but this gross sabotage was stopped in a few weeks by the proletarian government. It showed that not the slightest impression could be made on it by such refusal; and after we had put an end to this gross sabotage this same enemy tried other methods.

Time and again it has happened that supporters of the bourgeoisie have been found even at the head of workers' organisations; we had to get down to the business of making the fullest use of the workers' strength. Take, for example, what we experienced when the railway administration, the railway proletariat were headed by people who led them along the bourgeois\*, and not the proletarian path. We know that in all spheres wherever we could get rid of the bourgeoisie, we did so, but at what a price! In each sphere we gained ground inch by inch, and promoted the best of our workers, those who had gone through the hard school of organising the administration. Viewed from the side, all this is, perhaps, not very difficult, but actually, if you go into the matter, you will see with what difficulty the workers, who had been through all the stages of the struggle, asserted their rights, how they set things going—from workers' control to workers' management of industry, or how on the railways, beginning from the notorious Vikzhel\*, they got an efficient organisation working; you will see how representatives of the working class are gradually making their way into all our organisations and strengthening them by their activity. Take the co-operatives, for example, where we see huge numbers of workers' representatives. We know that formerly they consisted almost entirely of non-working-class people. Furthermore, in the old co-operatives, there were people steeped in the views and interests of the old bourgeois society. In this respect

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\* Vikzhel — All-Russia Executive Committee of the Railwaymen's Trade Union. — *Ed.*

the workers had to wage a long struggle before they could take power into their own hands and subordinate the co-operatives to their interests, before they could carry on more fruitful work.

But our most important work has been the reorganisation of the old machinery of state, and although this has been a difficult job, over the last two years we have seen the results of the efforts of the working class and we can say that in this sphere we have thousands of working-class representatives who have been all through the fire of the struggle, forcing out the representatives of bourgeois rule step by step. We see workers not only in state bodies; we see them in the food supply services, in the sphere that was controlled almost exclusively by representatives of the old bourgeois government, of the old bourgeois state. The workers have created a food supply apparatus, and although a year ago we could not yet fully cope with the work, although a year ago workers made up only 30 per cent of it, we now have as many as 80 per cent workers in the food supply organisations. These simple and striking figures express the step taken by our country, and for us the important thing is that we have achieved great results in organising proletarian power after the political revolution.

Furthermore, the workers have done and are continuing to do the important job of producing proletarian leaders. Tens and hundreds of thousands of valiant workers are emerging from our midst and are going into battle against the whiteguard generals. Step by step we are gaining power from our enemy; formerly workers were not very skilful in this field, but we are now gradually winning area after area from our enemy, and there are no difficulties that can stop the proletariat. The proletariat is gaining in every sphere, gradually, one after another, despite all difficulties, and is attracting representatives of the proletarian masses so that in every branch of administration, in every little unit, from top to bottom, representatives of the proletariat themselves go through the school of administration, and then train tens and hundreds of thousands of people capable of independently conducting all the affairs of state administration, of building the state by their own efforts.

Comrades! Lately we have witnessed a particularly brilliant example of success in our work. We know how widespread subbotniks have become among class-conscious workers. We know those representatives of communism who most of all have suffered the torments of famine and bitter cold, but whose contribution in the rear is no smaller than that of the Red Army at the front; we know how, at the critical moment when the enemy was advancing on Petrograd, and Denikin took Orel, when the bourgeoisie were in high spirits and resorted to their last and favourite weapon, the spreading of panic, we announced a Party Week. At that moment the worker Communists went to the industrial workers and other working people, to those who most of all had endured the burden of the imperialist war and were starving and freezing, to those on whom the bourgeois panic-mongers counted most of all, to those who bore most of the burden on their backs; it was to them that we addressed ourselves during the Party Week and said: "You are scared by the burdens of working-class rule, by the threats of the imperialists and capitalists; you see our work and our difficulties; we appeal to you, and we open wide the doors of our Party only to you, only to the representatives of the working people. At this difficult moment we count on you and call you into our ranks there to undertake the whole burden of building the state." You know that it was a terribly difficult moment, both materially and because of the enemy's successes in foreign policy and in the military sphere. And you know what unparalleled, unexpected and unbelievable success marked the end of this Party Week in Moscow alone, where we got over 14 thousand new Party members. There you have the result of the Party Week that is totally transforming, that is remaking the working class and by the experience of work is turning those who were the passive, inert instruments of the bourgeois government, the exploiters, and the bourgeois state into real creators of the future communist society. We know that we have a reserve of tens and hundreds of thousands of working-class and peasant youths, those who saw and know to the full the old oppression of landowner and bourgeois society, who have seen the unparalleled difficulties of our constructive



work, who saw what heroes the first contingent of Party functionaries proved to be in 1917 and 1918, who have been coming to us in bigger numbers and whose devotion is the greater the severer our difficulties. These reserves give us confidence that in these two years we have achieved a firm and sound cohesion and now possess a source from which we shall for a long time be able to draw still more extensively, and so ensure that the working-people themselves undertake to develop the state. In this respect we have had such experience during these two years in applying working-class administration in all spheres, that we can say boldly and without any exaggeration that now all that remains is to continue what has been begun, and things will proceed as they have done these two years, but at an ever faster pace.

In another sphere, that of the relation of the working class to the peasantry, we have had far greater difficulties. Two years ago, in 1917, when power passed to the Soviets, the relation was still totally unclear. The peasantry as a whole had already turned against the landowners, and supported the working class, because it saw they were fulfilling the wishes of the peasant masses, that they were real working-class fighters, and not those who, in league with the landowners, had betrayed the peasantry. But we know perfectly well that a struggle was only just beginning within the peasantry. In the first year the urban proletariat still had no firm foothold in the countryside. This is to be seen with particular clarity in those border regions where the rule of the white-guards was for a time consolidated. We saw it last summer, in 1918, when they won easy victories in the Urals. We saw that proletarian rule was not yet established in the countryside itself, and that it was not enough to introduce it from outside. What was needed was that the peasantry should, by their own experience, by their own organisational work, arrive at the same conclusions, and although this work is immeasurably more difficult, slower and harder, it is incomparably more fruitful so far as results go. This is our main achievement of the second year of Soviet rule.

I shall not speak of the military significance of our victory over Kolchak, but I shall say that had the peasant-

ry not undergone the experience of comparing the rule of the bourgeois dictators with that of the Bolsheviks, that victory would not have been won. Yet the dictators began with a coalition, with a Constituent Assembly; in that government apparatus there participated the same Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks whom we meet at every step in our work as the people of yesterday, as the people who built co-operatives, trade unions, teachers' organisations and a host of other organisations which we have to reorganise. Kolchak began in alliance with them, with individuals for whom the Kerensky experiment was not enough—they undertook a second. They did so in order to get the border regions, those farthest from the centre, to rise against the Bolsheviks. We could not give the peasants in Siberia what the revolution gave them in the rest of Russia. In Siberia the peasants did not get landed estates, because there were none of them there, and that was why it was easier for them to put faith in the whiteguards. All the forces of the Entente and the imperialist army which had suffered least of all in the war, i.e., the Japanese army, were drawn into the struggle. We know that hundreds of millions of rubles were expended on assisting Kolchak, that all means were employed to support him. Was there anything he lacked on his side? He had everything. Everything possessed by the strongest powers in the world, as well as a peasantry and a huge territory almost devoid of an industrial proletariat. What caused the destruction of all this? The fact that the experience of the workers, soldiers and peasants showed once again that the Bolsheviks were right in their forecasts, in their appraisal of the relation of social forces, when they said that the alliance of the workers and peasants is effected with difficulty, but that at any rate it is the only invincible alliance against the capitalists.

This is science, comrades, if one may use that term here. This experience is one of the greatest difficulty, one that takes account of everything and consolidates everything—it is the experience of communism; we can only establish communism if the peasantry arrive consciously at a definite conclusion. We can do this only when we enter into alliance with the peasants. We were able to

convince ourselves of this by the Kolchak experience. The Kolchak revolt was an experience of great bloodshed, but that was no fault of ours.

You are now perfectly familiar with the second trouble that afflicts us; you know that famine and cold have affected our country more severely than any other. You know that the blame for this is thrown on communism, but you also know perfectly well that communism has nothing to do with it. In all countries we see increasing and growing famine and cold and soon everybody will be convinced that this situation in Russia is not the consequence of communism, but of four years of world-wide war. It is the war that has caused all the horror we are enduring, that has caused this famine and cold. But we believe that we shall soon emerge from this state of affairs. The whole problem is only that the workers must work, but work for themselves and not for those who for four years have been engaged in throat-cutting. As for the fight against famine and cold, it is going on everywhere. The most powerful states are now subject to this affliction.

We have had to resort to state requisitioning to collect grain from the many millions of our peasantry, and have done so not the way it was done by the capitalists, who operated along with the profiteers. In settling this problem we went with the workers, we went against the profiteers. We used the method of persuasion, we went to the peasantry and told them that all we were doing was in support of them and the workers. The peasant who has a grain surplus and delivers it to us at a fixed price is our ally. The one, however, who does not do so is our enemy, is a criminal, is an exploiter and profiteer, and we can have nothing in common with him. We went with a message to the peasant, and this message has increasingly drawn the peasantry to our side. We have got quite definite results in this field. Between August and October of last year we procured 37 million poods of grain, but this year we have procured 45 million poods, and that without undertaking a special and careful check. An improvement, as you see, is taking place, a slow but undoubted one. And even if we reckon with the gaps made by Denikin's occupation of our fertile region, there are nevertheless signs of our being able to carry through our

plan of procurement and plan of distribution at state prices. In this respect, too, our machinery has in a sense become established, and we are now taking the socialist path.

Now we are faced with the problem of fuel crisis. The grain problem is no longer so acute; the position is that we have grain, but have no fuel. We have been deprived of our coal-field by Denikin. The loss of this coal-field has brought us unprecedented difficulties, and in this case we are doing just what we did in relation to grain. As we did previously we are again addressing ourselves to the workers. In the same way as we reorganised our food supply machinery, which, after being strengthened and set going, fulfilled quite a definite job that has yielded splendid results, so we are now improving our fuel supply machinery day by day. We are telling the workers from what direction this or that danger is advancing on us, in which direction and from what region we must send new forces, and we are confident that, just as we conquered our grain difficulties last year, so now we shall conquer our fuel difficulties.

Allow me for the moment to confine myself to this summary of our work. In conclusion, I shall take the liberty of saying just a few words about how our international situation is improving. We have examined the path we have followed, and the results show that our path has been the right and proper one. When we took power in 1917, we were alone. In 1917 it was said in all countries that Bolshevism could not take root. Now there is a powerful communist movement in those same countries. In the second year after we conquered power, six months after we founded the Third International, the Communist International, this International has in fact become the main force in the labour movement of all countries. In this respect the experience we have undergone has yielded the most splendid, unparalleled and rapid results. True, the movement to freedom in Europe is not proceeding in the same way as in our country. But if you recall our two years of struggle, you will see that in the Ukraine too, and even in some parts of Russia proper, where the population was of a specific composition—for instance, in the Cossack and Siberian areas, or in the Urals—the

movement to victory was not so rapid and did not follow the same road as in Petrograd and in Moscow, in the heart of Russia. Of course, we cannot be surprised at the slower pace of the movement in Europe, where pressure of jingoism and imperialism that has to be surmounted is greater; nonetheless the movement is proceeding unswervingly, along the very road being indicated by the Bolsheviks. Everywhere we are witnessing this forward movement. The mouthpieces of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries are yielding place everywhere to representatives of the Third International. The old leaders are falling, and the communist movement has risen everywhere, and that is why, after two years of Soviet rule, we can say, supported by the facts, we have every right to say, that not only on the scale of the Russian state, but also on an international scale we now have the following of all the politically conscious, all that are revolutionary among the masses, in the revolutionary world. And we can say that after what we have endured no difficulties hold any terrors for us, that we shall withstand all these difficulties, and then conquer them all. (*Stormy applause.*)

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**SPEECH AT A JOINT PLENUM  
OF THE MOSCOW SOVIET OF WORKERS', PEASANTS'  
AND RED ARMY DEPUTIES, THE MOSCOW COMMITTEE  
OF THE R.C.P.(B.)  
AND THE MOSCOW CITY TRADE UNION COUNCIL,  
DEDICATED TO THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER  
REVOLUTION, NOVEMBER 6, 1920**

*(Prolonged applause.)* Comrades, we have gathered here today to commemorate our proletariat's days of struggle and our revolutionary achievements. Today we can celebrate our victory. Despite the unparalleled difficulties of life and the unparalleled efforts of our enemies, we have won. We have been winning for three years. This is a gigantic victory, one that previously none of us would have believed possible. Three years ago, when we were at Smolny,<sup>9</sup> the Petrograd workers' uprising showed us that it was more unanimous than we could have expected, but had we been told that night that, three years later, we would have what now exists, that we would have this victory of ours, nobody, not even the most incurable optimist, would have believed it. We knew at that time that our victory would be a lasting one only when our cause had triumphed the world over, and so when we began working for our cause we counted exclusively on the world revolution. The imperialist war changed all the forms of life we had lived in till then, and we had no way of knowing what forms would be assumed by the struggle, which had dragged on much longer than could have been expected. Now, after three years, it turns out that we are immeasurably stronger than we were before, but the world bourgeoisie are still very strong, too; yet, despite the fact that they are far stronger than we are, we can say that we have won. We have directed all our energies to disintegrating this bourgeoisie, and in this respect our work has not been without success. The reason for this is that we staked our chances on world revolution and were undoubtedly right in doing so. We knew that the whole world was heading for destruction; we knew that, after the imperialist war, things could

not go on in the old way because the imperialist war had thoroughly destroyed all the old economic and legal relations, all the conditions of existence on which the old order had till then been based. And if, at a time when the imperialist war had done a thousand times more than our propaganda did to pave the way for a *débâcle*, the proletariat in even a single country took action ending in victory, this would be sufficient to undermine the forces of the world bourgeoisie.

If we now cast a glance at the international situation—and we have always stressed that we regard things from the international standpoint—and examine the history of the wars that have been waged against Soviet Russia, we shall see that we are at peace with almost all the little bourgeois states bordering on us, states in which Bolsheviks are persecuted and executed. These states are servants and slaves to the Entente, and they want to ruin and destroy Soviet Russia, yet we have concluded peace with them—against the Entente's wishes. Three such mighty powers as Britain, France and America could not unite against us, and were defeated in a war they had begun against us with their joint forces. Why has that been? It has been because their economies and life in their countries have been undermined, because they are moribund, because they cannot go on living in the old way, and because the class at whose will they exist—the bourgeois class—has gone rotten. That class drove over 10 million people into the imperialist war and to destruction. For what purpose? For the purpose of partitioning the world among a handful of capitalists. In doing so, however, it has come to the end of its strength, and has undermined the foundations of its own existence; however strong it may seem militarily, it is internally impotent. This is no longer a proclamation in the Bolshevik spirit, but a fact that has been proved with fire and sword. However rich and strong that class may be, it is doomed, whereas we are a class that is advancing towards victory. Even though we are weaker than our enemies, we have been winning for three years, and we have the right to say, without the least boasting, that we have won.

In saying that, we should not forget another aspect of the matter. We should not forget that we have won no

more than half of the victory. We have won because we have been able to hold out against states that are stronger than we are, and moreover have joined forces with our émigré exploiters—the landowners and capitalists. We have always known and shall never forget that ours is an international cause, and until the revolution takes place in all lands, including the richest and most highly civilised ones, our victory will be only a half-victory, perhaps still less. At present we are gaining the upper hand in the fighting against Wrangel; we are expecting news that will bear out our expectations. We are confident that if we do not succeed in capturing the Crimea within the next few days, we shall do so several days later, but we have no guarantee that this is the last effort against us on the part of the world bourgeoisie. On the contrary, facts in our possession show that this effort will be repeated in the spring. We know that their chances of success will be negligible, and we know too that our military forces will be more powerful than those of any other country. For all that, however, the danger is not yet over; it still exists and will continue to do so until the revolution is victorious in one or in several advanced countries.

We know that things are moving in that direction; we know that the Second Congress of the Third International, which was held in Moscow during the summer, did an immense job, one that has no precedent. Some of you may have been present when Comrade Zinoviev delivered his report, in which he dealt in detail with the congress of German Independents at Halle<sup>10</sup>. Many of you may have heard his graphic description of developments in a country in which the chances of a revolution are the greatest. Similar things are taking place in all countries. Communism has developed, grown strong, and created parties in all the leading countries. During this period, the cause of the international revolution has suffered a number of reverses in some small countries, where assistance in crushing the movement has come from such huge predators as Germany, which helped to crush the Finnish revolution, or those giants of capitalism, Britain, France and Austria, which crushed the revolution in Hungary. By doing so, however, they have multiplied



a thousandfold the elements of revolution in their own countries. Today the main reason why they have been weakened by the struggle is that their rear lines are not assured, because in all countries the workers and peasants do not want to fight against us, and heroic sailors have come to the fore, not only in our country, in Kronstadt, but also in their countries. Throughout France the names of the sailors who served in our Black Sea are associated with recollections of the Russian revolution; the French workers know that those who are now serving terms of penal servitude in France mutinied in the Black Sea because they refused to become butchers of the Russian workers and peasants. That is why the Entente has grown weak; that is why we say with confidence that our position is secure in the international field.

However, our victory is far from complete, comrades; we have won less than half of it. Yes, we have won a gigantic victory thanks to the self-sacrifice and enthusiasm of the Russian workers and peasants; we have been able to show that Russia is capable of producing not only the individual heroes who entered the struggle against tsarism and died at a time when the workers and peasants did not support them. We were right when we said that Russia would produce such heroes from among the masses, that she would be able to do so by the hundreds and thousands. We said that it would come about, and that then capitalism would be a lost cause. The main reason of our victory, its chief source, is the heroism, the self-sacrifice, and the unparalleled tenacity displayed by our Red Army men who have laid down their lives at the front, and by the workers and peasants who have suffered so much, especially the industrial workers, most of whom have suffered more during these three years than the workers did during the early years of capitalist slavery. They have endured cold, hunger and suffering—all this in order to retain power. Thanks to this tenacity and this heroism, they have created a rear that has proved the only strong rear existing at the moment among the belligerent forces. That is why we are strong and firm, whereas the Entente is steadily disintegrating before our very eyes.

However, with this enthusiasm and heroism alone, the cause of the revolution cannot be completed, carried on

to full victory. These qualities were sufficient to hurl back the enemy when he flung himself on us and tried to strangle us; they were sufficient for victory in a bloody conflict, but not for the ultimate goal. They are not enough because we are now faced with the second half of our task, the major and more difficult part. Our triumph of today, our confidence that we shall win, must be imbued with a quality that will enable us to gain a victory just as decisive in the second half of the task. Mere enthusiasm, the mere readiness of the workers and peasants to face death in accomplishing the second half of our task are not enough, because the second task is a most difficult one of constructive and creative work. From capitalism we inherited not only a ruined culture, not only wrecked factories, not only a despairing intelligentsia; we inherited a disunited and backward mass of individual proprietors; we inherited inexperience, an absence of the team spirit and of an understanding that the past must be buried.

Such are the problems we have to solve today. We must remember that today's temper has to be put to work for a long time to come, so that fragmentation of our economic life may be done away with. We cannot return to the old ways. By overthrowing the rule of the exploiters we have already accomplished the greater part of the job. We must now unite all working men and women and get them to work together. We have come here like conquerors entering new territory; yet, despite difficult conditions we are working in, we have been victorious at the front. We see that our work is progressing today better than it did a year ago. We know that we cannot provide sufficient food for all, and we are not certain that hunger and cold will not knock at the doors of homes and cottages, but we do know that we have won. We know that our productive power is enormous even now, after the severe imperialist and civil wars; we know that we shall not let the workers and peasants starve and freeze; however, to be able to do that, we must count all our resources and share them out properly. We do not yet know how to do that because capitalism taught every petty proprietor to look after his own interests, to think of how to get rich, and become one of the money-bags as quickly as possible; it did not teach anybody how to wage a

common struggle for some definite idea. We must now be guided by another principle. The other and more difficult part of our task now faces us. The enthusiasm that now fills us may last another year, perhaps even five years. However we should remember that the struggle we shall have to wage is made up of ordinary workaday tasks. Around us are small-scale economic tasks. Furthermore, you know that the little units that keep our economic life going are the same that served in the past—petty officials, petty bureaucrats accustomed to the old and selfish way of doing things. The struggle against such things must become the task of the hour. On the occasion of these festivities, the occasion of this triumphant mood of ours, the occasion of the third anniversary of the establishment of Soviet rule we must become imbued with the labour enthusiasm, the will to work, and the persistence on which the speedy salvation of the workers and peasants, the salvation of the national economy now depends. We shall then see that our victory in the accomplishment of this task will be more effective and lasting than in all bloody battles of the past. (*Prolonged applause.*)

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#### FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The fourth anniversary of October 25 (November 7) is approaching.

The farther that great day recedes from us, the more clearly we see the significance of the proletarian revolution in Russia, and the more deeply we reflect upon the practical experience of our work as a whole.

Very briefly and, of course, in very incomplete and rough outline, this significance and experience may be summed up as follows.

The direct and immediate object of the revolution in Russia was a bourgeois-democratic one, namely, to destroy the survivals of medievalism and sweep them away completely, to purge Russia of this barbarism, of this shame, and to remove this immense obstacle to all culture and progress in our country.

And we can justifiably pride ourselves on having carried out that purge with greater determination and much more rapidly, boldly and successfully, and, from the point of view of its effect on the masses, much more widely and deeply, than the great French Revolution over one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Both the anarchists and the petty-bourgeois democrats (i. e., the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who are the Russian counterparts of that international social type) have talked and are still talking an incredible lot of nonsense about the relation between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist (*that is*, proletarian) revolution. The last four years have proved to the hilt that our interpretation of Marxism on this point and our estimate of the experience of former revolutions were correct. We have *consummated* the bourgeois-democratic revolution as nobody had done before. We are *advancing*

towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) *struggle alone* will determine how far we shall advance, what part of this immense and lofty task we shall accomplish, and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories. Time will show. But we see even now that a tremendous amount—tremendous for this ruined, exhausted and backward country—has already been done towards the socialist transformation of society.

Let us, however, finish what we have to say about the bourgeois-democratic content of our revolution. Marxists must understand what that means. To explain, let us take a few striking examples.

The bourgeois-democratic content of the revolution means that the social relations (system, institutions) of the country are purged of medievalism, serfdom, feudalism.

What were the chief manifestations, survivals, remnants of serfdom in Russia up to 1917? The monarchy, the system of social estates, landed proprietorship and land tenure, the status of women, religion, and national oppression. Take any one of these Augean stables, which, incidentally, were left largely uncleansed by all the more advanced states when they accomplished *their* bourgeois-democratic revolutions one hundred and twenty-five, two hundred and fifty and more years ago (1649 in England); take any of these Augean stables, and you will see that we have cleansed them thoroughly. In a matter of *ten weeks*, from October 25 (November 7), 1917 to January 5, 1918, when the Constituent Assembly was dissolved, we accomplished a thousand times more in this respect than was accomplished by the bourgeois democrats and liberals (the Cadets) and by the petty-bourgeois democrats (the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries) *during the eight months* they were in power.

Those poltroons, gas-bags, vainglorious Narcissuses and petty Hamlets brandished their wooden swords—but did not even destroy the monarchy! We cleansed out all that monarchist muck as nobody had ever done before. We left not a stone, not a brick of that ancient edifice,

the social-estate system (even the most advanced countries, such as Britain, France and Germany, have not completely eliminated the survivals of that system to this day!), standing. We tore out the deep-seated roots of the social-estate system, namely, the remnants of feudalism and serfdom in the system of landownership, to the last. "One may argue" (there are plenty of quill-drivers, Cadets, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries abroad to indulge in such arguments) as to what "in the long run" will be the outcome of the agrarian reform effected by the Great October Revolution. We have no desire at the moment to waste time on such controversies, for we are deciding this, as well as the mass of accompanying controversies, by struggle. But the fact cannot be denied that the petty-bourgeois democrats "compromised" with the landowners, the custodians of the traditions of serfdom, for eight months, while we completely swept the landowners and all their traditions from Russian soil in a few weeks.

Take religion, or the denial of rights to women, or the oppression and inequality of the non-Russian nationalities. These are all problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The vulgar petty-bourgeois democrats talked about them for eight months. In *not a single* one of the most advanced countries in the world have *these* questions been *completely* settled on *bourgeois-democratic* lines. In our country they have been settled completely by the legislation of the October Revolution. We have fought and are fighting religion in earnest. We have granted *all* the non-Russian nationalities *their own* republics or autonomous regions. We in Russia no longer have the base, mean and infamous denial of rights to women or inequality of the sexes, that disgusting survival of feudalism and medievalism, which is being renovated by the avaricious bourgeoisie and the dull-witted and frightened petty bourgeoisie in every other country in the world without exception.

All this goes to make up the content of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. A hundred and fifty and two hundred and fifty years ago the progressive leaders of that revolution (or of those revolutions, if we consider each national variety of the one general type) promised to rid

mankind of medieval privileges, of sex inequality, of state privileges for one religion or another (or "religious ideas", "the church" in general), and of national inequality. They promised, but did not keep their promises. They could not keep them, for they were hindered by their "respect"—for the "sacred right of private property". Our proletarian revolution was not afflicted with this accursed "respect" for this thrice-accursed medievalism and for the "sacred right of private property".

But in order to consolidate the achievements of the bourgeois-democratic revolution for the peoples of Russia, we were obliged to go farther; and we did go farther. We solved the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in passing, as a "by-product" of our main and genuinely *proletarian*-revolutionary, socialist activities. We have always said that reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. We said—and proved it by deeds—that bourgeois-democratic reforms are a by-product of the proletarian, i.e., of the socialist revolution. Incidentally, the Kautskys, Hilferdings, Martovs, Chernovs, Hilluits, Longuets, MacDonalds, Turatis and other heroes of "Two-and-a-Half"<sup>11</sup> Marxism were incapable of understanding *this* relation between the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian-socialist revolutions. The first develops into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first. Struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far the second succeeds in outgrowing the first.

The Soviet system is one of the most vivid proofs, or manifestations, of how the one revolution develops into the other. The Soviet system provides the maximum of democracy for the workers and peasants; at the same time, it marks a break with *bourgeois* democracy and the rise of a *new*, epoch-making *type* of democracy, namely, proletarian democracy, or the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Let the curs and swine of the moribund bourgeoisie and of the petty-bourgeois democrats who trail behind them heap imprecations, abuse and derision upon our heads for our reverses and mistakes in the work of building up *our* Soviet system. We do not forget for a moment that we have committed and are committing numerous mistakes and are suffering numerous reverses. How can reverses and

mistakes be avoided in a matter so new in the history of the world as the building of an unprecedented *type* of state edifice! We shall work steadfastly to set our reverses and mistakes right and to improve our practical application of Soviet principles, which is still very, very far from being perfect. But we have a right to be and are proud that to us has fallen the good fortune to *begin* the building of a Soviet state, and thereby to *usher in* a new era in world history, the era of the rule of a *new* class, a class which is oppressed in every capitalist country, but which everywhere is marching forward towards a new life, towards victory over the bourgeoisie, towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, towards the emancipation of mankind from the yoke of capital and from imperialist wars.

The question of imperialist wars, of the international policy of finance capital which now dominates the whole world, a policy that must *inevitably* engender new imperialist wars, that must inevitably cause an extreme intensification of national oppression, pillage, brigandry and the strangulation of weak, backward and small nationalities by a handful of "advanced" powers—that question has been the keystone of all policy in all the countries of the globe since 1914. It is a question of life and death for millions upon millions of people. It is a question of whether 20,000,000 people (as compared with the 10,000,000 who were killed in the war of 1914-18 and in the supplementary "minor" wars that are still going on) are to be slaughtered in the next imperialist war, which the bourgeoisie are preparing, and which is growing out of capitalism before our very eyes. It is a question of whether in that future war, which is inevitable (if capitalism continues to exist), 60,000,000 people are to be maimed (compared with the 30,000,000 maimed in 1914-18). In this question, too, our October Revolution marked the beginning of a new era in world history. The lackeys of the bourgeoisie and its yes-men—the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, and the petty-bourgeois, allegedly "socialist", democrats all over the world—derided our slogan "convert the imperialist war into a civil war". But that slogan proved to be the *truth*—it was the only truth, unpleasant, blunt, naked and brutal, but



nevertheless the *truth*, as against the host of most refined jingoist and pacifist lies. Those lies are being dispelled. The Brest peace has been exposed. And with every passing day the significance and consequences of a peace that is even worse than the Brest peace—the peace of Versailles—are being more relentlessly exposed. And the millions who are thinking about the causes of the recent war and of the approaching future war are more and more clearly realising the grim and inexorable truth that it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace (if the old orthography were still in use, I would have written the word *mir* in two ways, to give it both its meanings)\* which inevitably engenders imperialist war, that it is impossible to escape that inferno, *except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution.*

Let the bourgeoisie and the pacifists, the generals and the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalists and the philistines, the pious Christians and the knights of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals vent their fury against that revolution. No torrents of abuse, calumnies and lies can enable them to conceal the historic fact that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the slaves have replied to a war between slave-owners by openly proclaiming the slogan: "Convert this war between slave-owners for the division of their loot into a war of the slaves of all nations against the slave-owners of all nations."

For the first time in hundreds and thousands of years that slogan has grown from a vague and helpless waiting into a clear and definite political programme, into an effective struggle waged by millions of oppressed people under the leadership of the proletariat; it has grown into the first victory of the proletariat, the first victory in the struggle to abolish war and to unite the workers of all countries against the united bourgeoisie of different nations, against the bourgeoisie that makes peace and war at the expense of the slaves of capital, the wage-workers, the peasants, the working people.

This first victory is *not yet the final victory*, and it was achieved by our October Revolution at the price of incred-

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\* In Russian, the word *mir* has two meanings (*world* and *peace*) and had two different spellings in the old orthography. — *Tr.*

ible difficulties and hardships, at the price of unprecedented suffering, accompanied by a series of serious reverses and mistakes on our part. How could a single backward people be expected to frustrate the imperialist wars of the most powerful and most developed countries of the world without sustaining reverses and without committing mistakes! We are not afraid to admit our mistakes and shall examine them dispassionately in order to learn how to correct them. But the fact remains that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the promise "to reply" to war between the slave-owners by a revolution of the slaves directed *against* all the slave-owners has been *completely fulfilled*—and is being fulfilled despite all difficulties.

We have made the start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown.

Gentlemen, capitalists of all countries, keep up your hypocritical pretence of "defending the fatherland"—the Japanese fatherland against the American, the American against the Japanese, the French against the British, and so forth! Gentlemen, knights of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, pacifist petty bourgeoisie and philistines of the entire world, go on "evading" the question of how to combat imperialist wars by issuing new "Basle Manifestos" (on the model of the Basle Manifesto of 1912<sup>12</sup>). *The first Bolshevik revolution* has wrested *the first hundred million people* of this earth from the clutches of imperialist war and the imperialist world. Subsequent revolutions will deliver the rest of mankind from such wars and from such a world.

Our last, but most important and most difficult task, the one we have done least about, is economic development, the laying of economic foundations for the new, socialist edifice on the site of the demolished feudal edifice and the semi-demolished capitalist edifice. It is in this most important and most difficult task that we have sustained the greatest number of reverses and have made most mistakes. How could anyone expect that a task so new to the world could be begun without reverses and

without mistakes! But we have begun it. We shall continue it. At this very moment we are, by our New Economic Policy, correcting a number of our mistakes. We are learning how to continue erecting the socialist edifice in a small-peasant country without committing such mistakes.

The difficulties are immense. But we are accustomed to grappling with immense difficulties. Not for nothing do our enemies call us "stone-hard" and exponents of a "firm-line policy". But we have also learned, at least to some extent, another art that is essential in revolution, namely, flexibility, the ability to effect swift and sudden changes of tactics if changes in objective conditions demand them, and to choose another path for the achievement of our goal if the former path proves to be inexpedient or impossible at the given moment.

Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people we expected to accomplish economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected—or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration—to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small-peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary—state capitalism and socialism—in order to *prepare*—to prepare by many years of effort—for the transition to communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles, we must first set to work in this small-peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to communism, we shall never bring scores of millions of people to communism. That is what experience, the objective course of the development of the revolution, has taught us.

And we, who during these three or four years have learned a little to make abrupt changes of front (when abrupt changes of front are needed), have begun zeal-

ously, attentively and sedulously (although still not zealously, attentively and sedulously enough) to learn to make a new change of front, namely, the New Economic Policy. The proletarian state must become a cautious, assiduous and shrewd "businessman", a punctilious *wholesale merchant*—otherwise it will never succeed in putting this small-peasant country economically on its feet. Under existing conditions, living as we are side by side with the capitalist (for the time being capitalist) West, there is no other way of progressing to communism. A wholesale merchant seems to be an economic type as remote from communism as heaven from earth. But that is one of the contradictions which, in actual life, lead from a small-peasant economy via state capitalism to socialism. Personal incentive will step up production; we must increase production first and foremost and at all costs. Wholesale trade economically unites millions of small peasants: it gives them a personal incentive, links them up and leads them to the next step, namely, to various forms of association and alliance in the process of production itself. We have already started the necessary changes in our economic policy and already have some successes to our credit; true, they are small and partial, but nonetheless they are successes. In this new field of "tuition" we are already finishing our preparatory class. By persistent and assiduous study, by making practical experience the test of every step we take, by not fearing to alter over and over again what we have already begun, by correcting our mistakes and most carefully analysing their significance, we shall pass to the higher classes. We shall go through the whole "course", although the present state of world economics and world politics has made that course much longer and much more difficult than we would have liked. No matter at what cost, no matter how severe the hardships of the transition period may be—despite disaster, famine and ruin—we shall not flinch; we shall triumphantly carry our cause to its goal.

October 14, 1921

*Pravda* No. 234,  
October 18, 1921

Signed: *N. Lenin*

*Collected Works*, Vol. 33,  
pp. 51-59

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GOLD NOW AND AFTER THE COMPLETE VICTORY OF SOCIALISM

The best way to celebrate the anniversary of a great revolution is to concentrate attention on its unsolved problems. It is particularly appropriate and necessary to celebrate the revolution in this way at a time when we are faced with fundamental problems that the revolution has not yet solved, and when we must master something new (from the point of view of what the revolution has accomplished up to now) for the solution of these problems.

What is new for our revolution at the present time is the need for a "reformist", gradual, cautious and round-about approach to the solution of the fundamental problems of economic development. This "novelty" gives rise to a number of questions, perplexities and doubts in both theory and practice.

A theoretical question. How can we explain the transition from a series of extremely revolutionary actions to extremely "reformist" actions in the same field at a time when the revolution as a whole is making victorious progress? Does it not imply a "surrender of positions", an "admission of defeat", or something of that sort? Of course, our enemies—from the semi-feudal type of reactionaries to the Mensheviks or other knights of the Two-and-a-Half International—say that it does. They would not be enemies if they did not shout something of the sort on every pretext, and even without any pretext. The touching unanimity that prevails on this question among all parties, from the feudal reactionaries to the Mensheviks, is only further proof that all these parties constitute "one reactionary mass" opposed to the proletarian revolution (as Engels foresaw in his letters to Bebel of 1875 and 1884—be it said in parenthesis).

But there is "perplexity", shall we say, among friends, too.

Restore large-scale industry, organise the direct exchange of its goods for the produce of small-peasant farming, and thus assist the socialisation of the latter. For the purpose of restoring large-scale industry, borrow from the peasants a certain quantity of foodstuffs and raw materials by requisitioning—this was the plan (or method, system) that we followed for more than three years, up to the spring of 1921. This was a revolutionary approach to the problem—to break up the old social-economic system completely at one stroke and to substitute a new one for it.

Since the spring of 1921, instead of this approach, plan, method, or mode of action, we have been adopting (we have not yet "adopted" but are still "adopting", and have not yet fully realised it) a totally different method, a reformist type of method: not to *break up* the old social-economic system—trade, petty production, petty proprietorship, capitalism—but to *revive* trade, petty proprietorship, capitalism, while cautiously and gradually getting the upper hand over them, or making it possible to subject them to state regulation *only to the extent* that they revive.

That is an entirely different approach to the problem.

Compared with the previous, revolutionary, approach, it is a reformist approach (revolution is a change which breaks the old order to its very foundations, and not one that cautiously, slowly and gradually remodels it, taking care to break as little as possible).

The question that arises is this. If, after trying revolutionary methods, you find they have failed and adopt reformist methods, does it not prove that you are declaring the revolution to have been a mistake in general? Does it not prove that you should not have started with the revolution but should have started with reforms and confined yourselves to them?

That is the conclusion which the Mensheviks and others like them have drawn. But this conclusion is either sophistry, a mere fraud perpetrated by case-hardened politicians, or it is the childishness of political tyros. The greatest, perhaps the only danger to the genuine revo-

lutionary is that of exaggerated revolutionism, ignoring the limits and conditions in which revolutionary methods are appropriate and can be successfully employed. True revolutionaries have mostly come a cropper when they began to write "revolution" with a capital R, to elevate "revolution" to something almost divine, to lose their heads, to lose the ability to reflect, weigh and ascertain in the coolest and most dispassionate manner at what moment, under what circumstances and in which sphere of action you must act in a revolutionary manner, and at what moment, under what circumstances and in which sphere you must turn to reformist action. True revolutionaries will perish (not that they will be defeated from outside, but that their work will suffer internal collapse) only if they abandon their sober outlook and take it into their heads that the "great, victorious, world" revolution can and must solve all problems in a revolutionary manner under all circumstances and in all spheres of action. If they do this, their doom is certain.

Whoever gets such ideas into his head is lost because he has foolish ideas about a fundamental problem; and in a fierce war (and revolution is the fiercest sort of war) the penalty for folly is defeat.

What grounds are there for assuming that the "great, victorious, world" revolution can and must employ only revolutionary methods? There are none at all. The assumption is a pure fallacy; this can be proved by purely theoretical propositions if we stick to Marxism. The experience of our revolution also shows that it is a fallacy. From the theoretical point of view—foolish things are done in time of revolution just as at any other time, said Engels, and he was right. We must try to do as few foolish things as possible, and rectify those that are done as quickly as possible, and we must, as soberly as we can, estimate which problems can be solved by revolutionary methods at any given time and which cannot. From the point of view of our practical experience the Brest peace was an example of action that was not revolutionary at all; it was reformist, and even worse, because it was a retreat, whereas, as a general rule, reformist action advances slowly, cautiously, gradually, and does not move backward. The proof that our tactics in

concluding the Brest peace were correct is now so complete, so obvious to all and generally admitted, that there is no need to say any more about it.

Our revolution has completed only its bourgeois-democratic work; and we have every right to be proud of this. The proletarian or socialist part of its work may be summed up in three main points: (1) The revolutionary withdrawal from the imperialist world war; the exposure and *halting* of the slaughter organised by the two world groups of capitalist predators—for our part we have done this in full; others could have done it only if there had been a revolution in a number of advanced countries. (2) The establishment of the Soviet system, as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. An epoch-making change has been made. The era of bourgeois-democratic parliamentarism has come to an end. A new chapter in world history—the era of proletarian dictatorship—has been opened. The Soviet system and all forms of proletarian dictatorship will have the finishing touches put to them and be completed only by the efforts of a number of countries. There is still a great deal we have not done in this field. It would be unpardonable to lose sight of this. Again and again we shall have to improve the work, redo it, start from the beginning. Every step onward and upward that we take in developing our productive forces and our culture must be accompanied by the work of improving and altering our Soviet system—we are still low in the scale of economics and culture. Much will have to be altered, and to be “embarrassed” by this would be absurd (if not worse). (3) The creation of the economic basis of the socialist system; the main features of what is most important, most fundamental, have not yet been completed. This, however, is our soundest basis, soundest from the point of view of principle and from the practical point of view, from the point of view of the R.S.F.S.R. today and from the international point of view.

Since the main features of this basis have not yet been completed we must concentrate all our attention upon it. The difficulty here lies in the form of the transition.

In April 1918, in my *Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*, I wrote:

“It is not enough to be a revolutionary and an adherent



of socialism or a Communist in general. You must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which you must grasp with all your might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link; the order of the links, their form, the manner in which they are linked together, their difference from each other in the historical chain of events are not as simple and not as senseless as those in an ordinary chain made by a smith."

At the present time, in the sphere of activity with which we are dealing, this link is the revival of home *trade* under proper state regulation (direction). Trade is the "link" in the historical chain of events, in the transitional forms of our socialist construction in 1921-22, which we, the proletarian government, we, the ruling Communist Party, "*must grasp with all our might*". If we "grasp" this link firmly enough *now* we shall certainly control the *whole* chain in the very near future. If we do not, we shall not control the whole chain, we shall not create the foundation for socialist social and economic relations.

Communism and trade?! It sounds strange. The two seem to be unconnected, incongruous, poles apart. But if we study it from the point of view of *economics*, we shall find that the one is no more remote from the other than communism is from small-peasant, patriarchal farming.

When we are victorious on a world scale I think we shall use gold for the purpose of building public lavatories in the streets of some of the largest cities of the world. This would be the most "just" and most educational way of utilising gold for the benefit of those generations which have not forgotten how, for the sake of gold, ten million men were killed and thirty million maimed in the "great war for freedom", the war of 1914-18, the war that was waged to decide the great question of which peace was the worst, that of Brest or that of Versailles; and how, for the sake of this same gold, they certainly intend to kill twenty million men and to maim sixty million in a war, say, in 1925, or 1928, between, say, Japan and the U.S.A., or between Britain and the U.S.A., or something like that.

But however "just", useful, or humane it would be to utilise gold for this purpose, we nevertheless say that we must work for another decade or two with the same intensity and with the same success as in the 1917-21 period, only in a much wider field, in order to reach this stage. Meanwhile, we must save the gold in the R.S.F.S.R., sell it at the highest price, buy goods with it at the lowest price. When you live among wolves, you must howl like a wolf, while as for exterminating all the wolves, as should be done in a rational human society, we shall act up to the wise Russian proverb: "Boast not before but after the battle."

Trade is the only possible economic link between the scores of millions of small farmers and large-scale industry *if... if* there is not alongside these farmers an excellently equipped large-scale machine industry with a network of power transmission lines, an industry whose technical equipment, organisational "superstructures" and other features are sufficient to enable it to supply the small farmers with the best goods in larger quantities, more quickly and more cheaply than before. On a world scale this "if" *has already been achieved*, this condition already exists. But the country, formerly one of the most backward capitalist countries, which tried alone directly and at one stroke to create, to put into use, to organise practically the *new* links between industry and agriculture, failed to achieve this task by "direct assault", and must now try to achieve it by a number of slow, gradual, and cautious "siege" operations.

The proletarian government can control trade, direct it into definite channels, keep it within certain limits. I shall give a small, a very small example. In the Donets Basin a slight, still very slight, but undoubted revival in the economy has commenced, partly due to a rise in the productivity of labour at the large state mines, and partly due to the leasing of small mines to peasants. As a result, the proletarian government is receiving a small additional quantity (a miserably small quantity compared with what is obtained in the advanced countries, but an appreciable quantity considering our poverty-stricken condition) of coal at a cost of, say, 100; and it is selling this coal to various government departments at a price of,

say, 120, and to private individuals at a price of, say, 140. (I must say in parenthesis that my figures are quite arbitrary, first because I do not know the exact figures, and, secondly, I would not now make them public even if I did.) This looks as if we are *beginning*, if only in very modest dimensions, to control *exchange* between industry and agriculture, to control wholesale trade, to cope with the task of taking in hand the available, small, backward industry, or large-scale but weakened and ruined industry; of reviving trade on the *present* economic basis; of making the ordinary middle peasant (and that is the typical peasant, the peasant in the mass, the true representative of the petty-bourgeois milieu) feel the benefit of the economic revival; of taking advantage of it for the purpose of more systematically and persistently, more widely and successfully restoring large-scale industry.

We shall not surrender to "sentimental socialism", or to the old Russian, semi-aristocratic, semi-muzhik and patriarchal mood, with their supreme contempt for trade. We can use, and, since it is necessary, we *must* learn to use, all transitional economic forms for the purpose of strengthening the link between the peasantry and the proletariat, for the purpose of immediately reviving the economy of our ruined and tormented country, of improving industry, and facilitating such future, more extensive and more deep-going, measures as electrification.

Marxism alone has precisely and correctly defined the relation of reforms to revolution, although Marx was able to see this relation only from one aspect—under the conditions preceding the first to any extent permanent and lasting victory of the proletariat, if only in one country. Under those conditions, the basis of the proper relation was that reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. Throughout the capitalist world this relation is the foundation of the revolutionary tactics of the proletariat—the ABC, which is being distorted and obscured by the corrupt leaders of the Second International and the half pedantic and half finicky knights of the Two-and a Half International. After the victory of the proletariat, if only in one country,

something new enters into the relation between reforms and revolution. In principle, it is the same as before, but a change in form takes place, which Marx himself could not foresee, but which can be appreciated only on the basis of the philosophy and politics of Marxism. Why were we able to carry out the Brest retreat successfully? Because we had advanced so far that we had room in which to retreat. At such dizzy speed, *in a few weeks*, from October 25, 1917, to the Brest peace, we built up the Soviet state, withdrew from the imperialist war in a revolutionary manner and completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution so that *even* the great backward movement (the Brest peace) left us sufficient room in which to take advantage of the "respite" and to march forward victoriously against Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich, Pilsudski and Wrangel.

Before the victory of the proletariat, reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. After the victory (while still remaining a "by-product" on an international scale) they are, in addition, for the country in which victory has been achieved, a necessary and legitimate breathing space when, after the utmost exertion of effort, it becomes obvious that sufficient strength is lacking for the revolutionary accomplishment of some transition or another. Victory creates such a "reserve of strength" that it is possible to hold out even in a forced retreat, hold out both materially and morally. Holding out materially means preserving a sufficient superiority of forces to prevent the enemy from inflicting utter defeat. Holding out morally means not allowing oneself to become demoralised and disorganised, keeping a sober view of the situation, preserving vigour and firmness of spirit, even retreating a long way, but not too far, and in such a way as to stop the retreat in time and revert to the offensive.

We retreated to state capitalism, but we did not retreat too far. We are now retreating to the state regulation of trade, but we shall not retreat too far. There are visible signs that the retreat is coming to an end; there are signs that we shall be able to stop this retreat in the not too distant future. The more conscious, the more unanimous, the more free from prejudice we are in carrying out this

necessary retreat, the sooner shall we be able to stop it, and the more lasting, speedy and extensive will be our subsequent victorious advance.

November 5, 1921

*Pravda* No. 251,  
November 6-7, 1921

Signed: *N. Lenin*

*Collected Works*, Vol. 33,  
pp. 109-16

**SPEECH AT A MEETING  
OF THE PROKHOROV TEXTILE MILLS WORKERS,  
HELD TO MARK THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION  
NOVEMBER 6, 1921**

**Brief Newspaper Report**

*(The entire audience rises. Prolonged applause.)* If we glance back over the past four years we see that in no country of the world but Russia have the proletariat won complete victory over the bourgeoisie. But if we have been successful it is only because the peasants and workers knew they were fighting for their land and their rule. The war against Denikin, Wrangel and Kolchak was the first occasion in history when the working people fought successfully against their oppressors. The second cause of our victory is that the Entente could not fling sufficient numbers of loyal troops against Russia, as the soldiers of France and the sailors of Britain did not want to go and oppress their brothers.

Four years have enabled us to perform a miracle without parallel, in that a starving, weak and half-ruined country has defeated its enemies—the mighty capitalist countries.

We have won a strong position for ourselves in the world, one without parallel and totally unforeseen. What still remains is the tremendous task of setting our national economy going. All that we have achieved goes to show that we base ourselves on the most wonderful force in the world—that of the workers and peasants. This makes us confident that we shall meet our next anniversary with victory on the labour front.

*Pravda* No. 252,  
November 9, 1921  
and *Izvestia VTsIK* No. 251,  
November 9, 1921

*Collected Works*, Vol. 33,  
p. 117

**SPEECH AT A MEETING  
OF WORKING MEN AND WOMEN, RED ARMY MEN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF KHAMOVNIKI DISTRICT,  
MOSCOW, HELD TO MARK THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION  
NOVEMBER 7, 1921**

(*The orchestra plays "The Internationale". General applause.*) Comrades, I cannot share with you reminiscences that would be as instructive and interesting as those of the comrades who were present in Moscow and personally engaged in this or that struggle. I was not in Moscow at the time, so I think I shall confine myself to a brief message of greetings.

One of the previous comrades finished his speech with an appeal for the workers themselves to work hard in trade union and Soviet bodies and to put all their energies into that work. I should like to support that appeal.

Comrades, during these four years we have experienced an unparalleled struggle. And had we been told four years ago that the foreign worker was not so near to world revolution, that we would have to wage bitter civil war for three years, nobody at that time would have believed that we would withstand it. However, even though we were attacked on all sides, we withstood the onslaught, and if we succeeded in doing so it was not because some miracle took place (for intelligent people don't believe in miracles), but because the troops that were sent against us were unreliable. Had the British not departed from Archangel and the French sailors not left Odessa, and had the foreign worker dressed in soldier's uniform and sent against us not become a sympathiser of Soviet rule, we would not be guaranteed even now against the possibility of an offensive against us. But we are not afraid of that, because we know that we have many allies in every country. And the comrade who appealed to you here to work as a team was right, and I wholeheartedly support him, because you know that famine has attacked us at our most difficult hour, and the capitalists of the

whole world are trying to use this situation to drive us into bondage. But there are masses of workers who are making it possible for us to carry on the fight against them.

Take, for example, the seed help being given to the peasants. You know that the surplus-food appropriation system has been replaced by a tax in kind, and you can now see how well that tax and the seed loan are coming in.

The other day we discussed how to help the peasants of the famine-stricken areas to sow the spring-crop fields, and we found that the quantity of seeds possessed by the state is far from enough to sow even as much as was sown this year. To do that the state needs 30 million poods of grain, whereas the tax in kind will only yield us 15 million poods, so that we shall have to buy the remaining 15 million poods abroad. Lately we have seen that the British bourgeoisie are campaigning for the cancellation of the trade agreement with Soviet Russia, but the British workers are opposed to that. We know that agreements are being concluded with other countries, and difficult as it may be to purchase 15 million poods of grain, we shall be able to do so.

In all foreign countries we see industrial crises and unemployment on a huge scale. Germany, crushed by the shameless Versailles Treaty, has been forced for long out of the international arena. She has been crushed to such an extent by the Versailles peace that she cannot trade. The Allies concluded the unprecedented Versailles peace, and in spite of it are perishing themselves.

Our economic position is improving with every passing day.

What I would ask is that you respond to the previous comrade's appeal and work harder inside our country. The necessity for doing so must be fully appreciated, for we are working to improve the peasants' husbandry, and that requires far greater effort than before. We are confident that we shall be able to do this. (*Applause. The orchestra plays "The Internationale".*)



**FIVE YEARS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION  
AND THE PROSPECTS OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION**

**Report to the Fourth Congress of the Communist  
International, November 13, 1922**

*(Comrade Lenin is met with stormy, prolonged applause and a general ovation. All rise and join in singing "The Internationale".)* Comrades, I am down in the list as the main speaker, but you will understand that after my lengthy illness I am not able to make a long report. I can only make a few introductory remarks on the key questions. My subject will be a very limited one. The subject, "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of the World Revolution", is in general too broad and too large for one speaker to exhaust in a single speech. That is why I shall take only a small part of this subject, namely, the question of the New Economic Policy. I have deliberately taken only this small part in order to make you familiar with what is now the most important question—at all events, it is the most important to me, because I am now working on it.

And so, I shall tell you how we launched the New Economic Policy, and what results we have achieved with the aid of this policy. If I confine myself to this question, I shall, perhaps, succeed in giving you a general survey and a general idea of it.

To begin with how we arrived at the New Economic Policy, I must quote from an article I wrote in 1918. At the beginning of 1918<sup>12</sup>, in a brief polemic, I touched on the question of the attitude we should adopt towards state capitalism. I then wrote:

"State capitalism would be a *step forward* as compared with the present state of affairs (i.e., the state of affairs at that time) in our Soviet Republic. If in approximately six months' time state capitalism became established in our Republic, this would be a great success and a sure guarantee that within a year socialism will have gained

a permanently firm hold and will have become invincible in our country."

Of course, this was said at a time when we were more foolish than we are now, but not so foolish as to be unable to deal with such matters.

Thus, in 1918, I was of the opinion that with regard to the economic situation then obtaining in the Soviet Republic, state capitalism would be a step forward. This sounds very strange, and perhaps even absurd, for already at that time our Republic was a socialist republic and we were every day hastily—perhaps too hastily—adopting various new economic measures which could not be described as anything but socialist measures. Nevertheless, I then held the view that in relation to the economic situation then obtaining in the Soviet Republic state capitalism would be a step forward, and I explained my idea simply by enumerating the elements of the economic system of Russia. In my opinion these elements were the following: "1) patriarchal, i.e., the most primitive form of agriculture; 2) small commodity production (this includes the majority of the peasants who trade in grain); 3) private capitalism; 4) state capitalism and 5) socialism." All these economic elements were present in Russia at that time. I set myself the task of explaining the relationship of these elements to each other, and whether one of the non-socialist elements, namely, state capitalism should not be rated higher than socialism. I repeat: it seems very strange to everyone that a non-socialist element should be rated higher than, regarded as superior to, socialism in a republic which declares itself a socialist republic. But the fact will become intelligible if you recall that we definitely did not regard the economic system of Russia as something homogeneous and highly developed; we were fully aware that in Russia we had patriarchal agriculture, i.e., the most primitive form of agriculture, alongside the socialist form. What role could state capitalism play in these circumstances?

I then asked myself which of these elements predominated? Clearly, in a petty-bourgeois environment the petty-bourgeois element predominates. I recognised then that the petty-bourgeois element predominated; it was impossible to take a different view. The question I then put to

myself—this was in a specific controversy which had nothing to do with the present question—was: what is our attitude towards state capitalism? And I replied: although it is not a socialist form, state capitalism would be for us, and for Russia, a more favourable form than the existing one. What does that show? It shows that we did not overrate either the rudiments or the principles of socialist economy, although we had already accomplished the social revolution. On the contrary, at that time we already realised to a certain extent that it would be better if we first arrived at state capitalism and only after that at socialism.

I must lay special emphasis on this, because I assume that it is the only point of departure we can take, firstly, to explain what the present economic policy is; and, secondly, to draw very important practical conclusions also for the Communist International. I do not want to suggest that we had then a ready-made plan of retreat. This was not the case. Those brief lines set forth in a polemic were not by any means a plan of retreat. For example, they made no mention whatever of that very important point, freedom to trade, which is of fundamental significance to state capitalism. Yet they did contain a general, even if indefinite, idea of retreat. I think that we should take note of that not only from the viewpoint of a country whose economic system was, and is to this day, very backward, but also from the viewpoint of the Communist International and the advanced West-European countries. For example, just now we are engaged in drawing up a programme. I personally think that it would be best to hold simply a general discussion on all the programmes, to make the first reading, so to speak, and to get them printed, but not to take a final decision now, this year. Why? First of all, of course, because I do not think we have considered all of them in sufficient detail, and also because we have given scarcely any thought to possible retreat, and to preparations for it. Yet that is a question which, in view of such fundamental changes in the world as the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism with all its enormous difficulties, absolutely requires our attention. We must not only know how to act when we pass directly to the offensive and are victorious. In

revolutionary times this is not so difficult, nor so very important; at least, it is not the most decisive thing. There are always times in a revolution when the opponent loses his head; and if we attack him at such a time we may win an easy victory. But that is nothing, because our enemy, if he has enough endurance, can rally his forces beforehand, and so forth. He can easily provoke us to attack him and then throw us back for many years. For this reason, I think, the idea that we must prepare for ourselves the possibility of retreat is very important, and not only from the theoretical point of view. From the practical point of view, too, all the parties which are preparing to take the direct offensive against capitalism in the near future must now give thought to the problem of preparing for a possible retreat. I think it will do us no harm to learn this lesson together with all the other lessons which the experience of our revolution offers. On the contrary, it may prove beneficial in many cases.

Now that I have emphasised the fact that as early as 1918 we regarded state capitalism as a possible line of retreat, I shall deal with the results of our New Economic Policy. I repeat: at that time it was still a very vague idea, but in 1921, after we had passed through the most important stage of the Civil War—and passed through it victoriously—we felt the impact of a grave—I think it was the gravest—internal political crisis in Soviet Russia. This internal crisis brought to light discontent not only among a considerable section of the peasantry but also among the workers. This was the first and, I hope, the last time in the history of Soviet Russia that feeling ran against us among large masses of peasants, not consciously but instinctively. What gave rise to this peculiar, and for us, of course, very unpleasant, situation? The reason for it was that in our economic offensive we had run too far ahead, that we had not provided ourselves with adequate resources, that the masses sensed what we ourselves were not then able to formulate consciously but what we admitted soon after, a few weeks later, namely, that the direct transition to purely socialist forms, to purely socialist distribution, was beyond our available strength, and that if we were unable to effect a retreat so as to confine ourselves to easier tasks, we

would face disaster. The crisis began, I think, in February 1921. In the spring of that year we decided unanimously—I did not observe any considerable disagreement among us on this question—to adopt the New Economic Policy. Now, after eighteen months have elapsed, at the close of 1922, we are able to make certain comparisons. What has happened? How have we fared during this period of over eighteen months? What is the result? Has this retreat been of any benefit to us? Has it really saved us, or is the result still indefinite? This is the main question that I put to myself, and I think that this main question is also of first-rate importance to all the Communist Parties; for if the reply is in the negative, we are all doomed. I think that all of us can, with a clear conscience, reply to this question in the affirmative, namely, that the past eighteen months provide positive and absolute proof that we have passed the test.

I shall now try to prove this. To do that I must briefly enumerate all the constituent parts of our economy.

First of all I shall deal with our financial system and our famous Russian ruble. I think we can say that Russian rubles are famous, if only for the reason that their number now in circulation exceeds a quadrillion. (*Laughter.*) That is something! It is an astronomical figure. I am sure that not everyone here knows what this figure signifies. (*General laughter.*) But we do not think that the figure is so very important even from the point of view of economic science, for the noughts can always be crossed out. (*Laughter.*) We have achieved a thing or two in this art, which is likewise of no importance from the economic point of view, and I am sure that in the further course of events we shall achieve much more. But what is really important is the problem of stabilising the ruble. We are now grappling with this problem, our best forces are working on it, and we attach decisive importance to it. If we succeed in stabilising the ruble for a long period, and then for all time, it will prove that we have won. In that case all these astronomical figures, these trillions and quadrillions, will not have mattered in the least. We shall then be able to place our economy on a firm basis, and develop it further on a firm basis. On this question I think I can cite some fairly important and

decisive data. In 1921 the rate of exchange of the paper ruble remained stable for a period of less than three months. This year, 1922, which has not yet drawn to a close, the rate remained stable for a period of over five months. I think that this proof is sufficient. Of course, if you demand scientific proof that we shall definitely solve this problem, then it is not sufficient; but in general, I do not think it is possible to prove this entirely and conclusively. The data I have cited show that between last year, when we started on the New Economic Policy, and the present day, we have already learned to make progress. Since we have learned to do this, I am sure we shall learn to achieve further successes along this road, provided we avoid doing anything very foolish. The most important thing, however, is trade, namely, the circulation of commodities, which is essential for us. And since we have successfully coped with this problem for two years, in spite of having been in a state of war (for, as you know, Vladivostok was recaptured only a few weeks ago),<sup>14</sup> and in spite of the fact that only now we are able to proceed with our economic activities in a really systematic way—since we have succeeded in keeping the rate of the paper ruble stable for five months instead of only three months, I think I can say that we have grounds to be pleased. After all, we stand alone. We have not received any loans, and are not receiving any now. We have been given no assistance by any of the powerful capitalist countries, which organise their capitalist economy so “brilliantly” that they do not know to this day which way they are going. By the Treaty of Versailles they have created a financial system that they themselves cannot make head or tail of. If these great capitalist countries are managing things in this way, I think that we, backward and uneducated as we are, may be pleased with the fact that we have grasped the most important thing—the conditions for the stabilisation of the ruble. This is proved not by theoretical analysis but by practical experience, which in my opinion is more important than all the theoretical discussions in the world. Practice shows that we have achieved decisive results in that field, namely, we are beginning to push our economy towards the stabilisation of the ruble, which is

of supreme importance for trade, for the free circulation of commodities, for the peasants, and for the vast masses of small producers.

Now I come to our social objectives. The most important factor, of course, is the peasantry. In 1921 discontent undoubtedly prevailed among a vast section of the peasantry. Then there was the famine. This was the severest trial for the peasants. Naturally, all our enemies abroad shouted: "There, that's the result of socialist economy!" Quite naturally, of course, they said nothing about the famine actually being the terrible result of the Civil War. All the landowners and capitalists who had begun their offensive against us in 1918 tried to make out that the famine was the result of socialist economy. The famine was indeed a great and grave disaster which threatened to nullify the results of all our organisational and revolutionary efforts.

And so, I ask now, after this unprecedented and unexpected disaster, what is the position today, after we have introduced the New Economic Policy, after we have granted the peasants freedom to trade? The answer is clear and obvious to everyone; in one year the peasants have not only got over the famine, but have paid so much tax in kind that we have already received hundreds of millions of poods of grain, and that almost without employing any measures of coercion. Peasant uprisings, which previously, before 1921, were, so to speak, a common occurrence in Russia, have almost completely ceased. The peasants are satisfied with their present position. We can confidently assert that. We think that this evidence is more important than any amount of statistical proof. Nobody questions the fact that the peasants are a decisive factor in our country. And the position of the peasantry is now such that we have no reason to fear any movement against us from that quarter. We say that quite consciously, without exaggeration. This we have already achieved. The peasantry may be dissatisfied with one aspect or another of the work of our authorities. They may complain about this. That is possible, of course, and inevitable, because our machinery of state and our state-operated economy are still too inefficient to avert it; but any serious dissatisfaction with us on the part of the

peasantry as a whole is quite out of the question. This has been achieved in the course of one year. I think that is already quite a lot.

Now I come to our light industry. In industry we have to make a distinction between heavy and light industry because the situation in them is different. As regards light industry, I can safely say that there is a general revival. I shall not go into details. I did not set out to quote a lot of statistics. But this general impression is based on facts, and I can assure you that it is not based on anything untrue or inaccurate. There is a general revival in light industry, and, as a result, a definite improvement in the conditions of the workers in Petrograd and Moscow. In other districts this is observed to a lesser degree, because heavy industry predominates in them. So this does not apply generally. Nevertheless, I repeat, light industry is undoubtedly on the upgrade, and the conditions of the workers in Petrograd and Moscow have unquestionably improved. In the spring of 1921 there was discontent among the workers in both these cities. That is definitely not the case now. We, who watch the conditions and mood of the workers from day to day, make no mistake on that score.

The third question is that of heavy industry. I must say that the situation here is still grave. Some turn for the better occurred in 1921-22, so that we may hope that the situation will improve in the near future. We have already gathered some of the resources necessary for this. In a capitalist country a loan of hundreds of millions would be required to improve the situation in heavy industry. No improvement would be possible without it. The economic history of the capitalist countries shows that heavy industry in backward countries can only be developed with the aid of long-term loans of hundreds of millions of dollars or gold rubles. We did not get such loans, and so far have received nothing. All that is now being written about concessions and so forth is not worth much more than the paper it is written on. We have written a great deal about this lately and in particular about the Urquhart concession. Yet I think our concessions policy is a very good one. However, we have not concluded a single profitable concession agreement so



far. I ask you to bear that in mind. Thus, the situation in heavy industry is really a very grave problem for our backward country, because we cannot count on loans from the wealthy countries. In spite of that, we see a tangible improvement, and we also see that our trading has brought us some capital. True, it is only a very modest sum as yet—a little over twenty million gold rubles. At any rate, a beginning has been made; our trade is providing us with funds which we can employ for improving the situation in heavy industry. At the present moment, however, our heavy industry is still in great difficulties. But I think that the decisive circumstance is that we are already in a position to save a little. And we shall go on saving. We must economise now though it is often at the expense of the population. We are trying to reduce the state budget, to reduce staffs in our government offices. Later on, I shall have a few words to say about our state apparatus. At all events, we must reduce it. We must economise as much as possible. We are economising in all things, even in schools. We must do this, because we know that unless we save heavy industry, unless we restore it, we shall not be able to build up an industry at all; and without an industry we shall go under as an independent country. We realise this very well.

The salvation of Russia lies not only in a good harvest on the peasant farms—that is not enough; and not only in the good condition of light industry, which provides the peasantry with consumer goods—this, too, is not enough; we also need *heavy* industry. And to put it in a good condition will require several years of work.

Heavy industry needs state subsidies. If we are not able to provide them, we shall be doomed as a civilised state, let alone as a socialist state. In this respect, we have taken a determined step. We have begun to accumulate the funds that we need to put heavy industry on its feet. True, the sum we have obtained so far barely exceeds twenty million gold rubles; but at any rate this sum is available, and it is earmarked exclusively for the purpose of reviving our heavy industry.

I think that, on the whole, I have, as I have promised, briefly outlined the principal elements of our economy, and feel that we may draw the conclusion from all

this that the New Economic Policy has already yielded dividends. We already have proof that, as a state, we are able to trade, to maintain our strong positions in agriculture and industry, and to make progress. Practical activity has proved it. I think this is sufficient for us for the time being. We shall have to learn much, and we have realised that we still have much to learn. We have been in power for five years, and during these five years we have been in a state of war. Hence, we have been successful.

This is understandable, because the peasantry were on our side. Probably no one could have supported us more than they did. They were aware that the whiteguards had the landowners behind them, and they hate the landowners more than anything in the world. That is why the peasantry supported us with all their enthusiasm and loyalty. It was not difficult to get the peasantry to defend us against the whiteguards. The peasants, who had always hated war, did all they possibly could in the war against the whiteguards, in the Civil War against the landowners. But this was not all, because in substance it was only a matter of whether power would remain in the hands of the landowners or of the peasants. This was not enough for us. The peasants know that we have seized power for the workers and that our aim is to use this power to establish the socialist system. Therefore, the most important thing for us was to lay the economic foundation for socialist economy. We could not do it directly. We had to do it in a roundabout way. The state capitalism that we have introduced in our country is of a special kind. It does not agree with the usual conception of state capitalism. We hold all the key positions. We hold the land; it belongs to the state. This is very important, although our opponents try to make out that it is of no importance at all. That is untrue. The fact that the land belongs to the state is extremely important, and economically it is also of great practical purport. This we have achieved, and I must say that all our future activities should develop only within that framework. We have already succeeded in making the peasantry content and in reviving both industry and trade. I have already said that our state capitalism differs from state capitalism in the literal sense of the

term in that our proletarian state not only owns the land, but also all the vital branches of industry. To begin with, we have leased only a certain number of the small and medium plants, but all the rest remain in our hands. As regards trade, I want to re-emphasise that we are trying to found mixed companies, that we are already forming them, i. e., companies in which part of the capital belongs to private capitalists—and foreign capitalists at that—and the other part belongs to the state. Firstly, in this way we are learning how to trade, and that is what we need. Secondly, we are always in a position to dissolve these companies if we deem it necessary, and do not, therefore, run any risks, so to speak. We are learning from the private capitalist and looking round to see how we can progress, and what mistakes we make. It seems to me that I need say no more.

I should still like to deal with several minor points. Undoubtedly, we have done, and will still do, a host of foolish things. No one can judge and see this better than I (*Laughter.*) Why do we do these foolish things? The reason is clear: firstly, because we are a backward country; secondly, because education in our country is at a low level; and thirdly, because we are getting no outside assistance. Not a single civilised country is helping us. On the contrary, they are all working against us. Fourthly, our machinery of state is to blame. We took over the old machinery of state, and that was our misfortune. Very often this machinery operates against us. In 1917, after we seized power, the government officials sabotaged us. This frightened us very much and we pleaded: "Please come back." They all came back, but that was our misfortune. We now have a vast army of government employees, but lack sufficiently educated forces to exercise real control over them. In practice it often happens that here at the top, where we exercise political power, the machine functions somehow; but down below government employees have arbitrary control and they often exercise it in such a way as to counteract our measures. At the top, we have, I don't know how many, but at all events, I think, no more than a few thousand, at the outside several tens of thousands of our own people. Down below, however, there are hundreds of

thousands of old officials whom we got from the tsar and from bourgeois society and who, partly deliberately and partly unwittingly, work against us. It is clear that nothing can be done in that respect overnight. It will take many years of hard work to improve the machinery, to remodee it, and to enlist new forces. We are doing this fairly quickly, perhaps too quickly. Soviet schools and Workers' Faculties have been formed; a few hundred thousand young people are studying; they are studying too fast perhaps, but at all events, a start has been made, and I think this work will bear fruit. If we do not work too hurriedly we shall, in a few years' time, have a large body of young people capable of thoroughly overhauling our state apparatus.

I have said that we have done a host of foolish things, but I must also say a word or two in this respect about our enemies. If our enemies blame us and say that Lenin himself admits that the Bolsheviki have done a host of foolish things, I want to reply to this: yes, but you know, the foolish things we have done are nonetheless very different from yours. We have only just begun to learn, but are learning so methodically that we are certain to achieve good results. But since our enemies, i. e., the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International, lay stress on the foolish things we have done, I take the liberty, for the sake of comparison, to cite the words of a celebrated Russian author, which I shall amend to read as follows: if the Bolsheviki do foolish things the Bolshevik says, "Twice two are five", but when their enemies, i.e., the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International, do foolish things, they get, "Twice two make a tallow candle". That is easily proved. Take, for example, the agreement concluded by the U.S.A., Great Britain, France and Japan with Kolchak. I ask you, are there any more enlightened and more powerful countries in the world? But what has happened? They promised to help Kolchak without calculation, without reflection, and without circumspection. It ended a fiasco, which, it seems to me, is difficult for the human intellect to grasp.

Or take another example, a closer and more important one: the Treaty of Versailles. I ask you, what have the "great" powers which have "covered themselves with

glory" done? How will they find a way out of this chaos and confusion? I don't think it will be an exaggeration to repeat that the foolish things we have done are nothing compared with those done in concert by the capitalist countries, the capitalist world and the Second International. That is why I think that the outlook for the world revolution—a subject which I must touch on briefly—is favourable. And given a certain definite condition, I think it will be even better. I should like to say a few words about this.

At the Third Congress, in 1921, we adopted a resolution on the organisational structure of the Communist Parties and on the methods and content of their activities. The resolution is an excellent one, but it is almost entirely Russian, that is to say, everything in it is based on Russian conditions. This is its good point, but it is also its failing. It is its failing because I am sure that no foreigner can read it. I have read it again before saying this. In the first place, it is too long, containing fifty or more points. Foreigners are not usually able to read such things. Secondly, even if they read it, they will not understand it because it is too Russian. Not because it is written in Russian—it has been excellently translated into all languages—but because it is thoroughly imbued with the Russian spirit. And thirdly, if by way of exception some foreigner does understand it, he cannot carry it out. This is its third defect. I have talked with a few of the foreign delegates and hope to discuss matters in detail with a large number of delegates from different countries during the Congress, although I shall not take part in its proceedings, for unfortunately it is impossible for me to do that. I have the impression that we made a big mistake with this resolution, namely, that we blocked our own road to further success. As I have said already, the resolution is excellently drafted; I am prepared to subscribe to every one of its fifty or more points. But we have not learnt how to present our Russian experience to foreigners. All that was said in the resolution has remained a dead letter. If we do not realise this, we shall be unable to move ahead. I think that after five years of the Russian revolution the most important thing for all of us, Russian and foreign com-

rades alike, is to sit down and study. We have only now obtained the opportunity to do so. I do not know how long this opportunity will last. I do not know for how long the capitalist powers will give us the opportunity to study in peace. But we must take advantage of every moment of respite from fighting, from war, to study, and to study from scratch.

The whole Party and all strata of the population of Russia prove this by their thirst for knowledge. This striving to learn shows that our most important task today is to study and to study hard. Our foreign comrades, too, must study. I do not mean that they have to learn to read and write and to understand what they read, as we still have to do. There is a dispute as to whether this concerns proletarian or bourgeois culture. I shall leave that question open. But one thing is certain: we have to begin by learning to read and write and to understand what we read. Foreigners do not need that. They need something more advanced: first of all, among other things they must learn to understand what we have written about the organisational structure of the Communist Parties, and what the foreign comrades have signed without reading and understanding. This must be their first task. That resolution must be carried out. It cannot be carried out overnight; that is absolutely impossible. The resolution is too Russian, it reflects Russian experience. That is why it is quite unintelligible to foreigners, and they cannot be content with hanging it in a corner like an icon and praying to it. Nothing will be achieved that way. They must assimilate part of the Russian experience. Just how that will be done, I do not know. The fascists in Italy may, for example, render us a great service by showing the Italians that they are not yet sufficiently enlightened and that their country is not yet ensured against the Black Hundreds. Perhaps this will be very useful. We Russians must also find ways and means of explaining the principles of this resolution to the foreigners. Unless we do that, it will be absolutely impossible for them to carry it out. I am sure that in this connection we must tell not only the Russians, but the foreign comrades as well, that the most important thing in the period we are now entering is to study. We

are studying in the general sense. They, however, must study in the special sense, in order that they may really understand the organisation, structure, method and content of revolutionary work. If they do that, I am sure the prospects of the world revolution will be not only good, but excellent. (*Stormy, prolonged applause. Shouts of "Long live our Comrade Lenin!" evoke a fresh stormy ovation.*)

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**SPEECH AT A PLENARY SESSION OF THE MOSCOW SOVIET  
NOVEMBER 20, 1922 <sup>15</sup>**

(*Stormy applause. "The Internationale" is sung.*) Comrades, I regret very much and apologise that I have been unable to come to your session earlier. As far as I know you intended a few weeks ago to give me an opportunity of attending the Moscow Soviet. I could not come because after my illness, from December onwards, I was incapacitated, to use the professional term, for quite a long time, and because of this reduced ability to work had to postpone my present address from week to week. A very considerable portion of my work which, as you will remember, I had first piled on Comrade Tsyurupa, and then on Comrade Rykov, I also had to pile additionally on Comrade Kamenev. And I must say that, to employ a simile I have already used, he was suddenly burdened with two loads. Though, to continue the simile, it should be said that the horse has proved to be an exceptionally capable and zealous one. (*Applause.*) All the same, however, nobody is supposed to drag two loads, and I am now waiting impatiently for Comrades Tsyurupa and Rykov to return, and we shall divide up the work at least a little more fairly. As for myself, in view of my reduced ability to work it takes me much more time to look into matters than I should like.

In December 1921, when I had to stop working altogether, it was the year's end. We were effecting the transition to the New Economic Policy, and it turned out already then that, although we had embarked upon this transition in the beginning of 1921, it was quite a difficult, I would say a very difficult, transition. We have now been effecting this transition for more than eighteen months, and one would think that it was time the majority took up new places and disposed themselves according



to the new conditions, particularly those of the New Economic Policy.

As to foreign policy, we had the fewest changes in that field. We pursued the line that we had adopted earlier, and I think I can say with a clear conscience that we pursued it quite consistently and with enormous success. There is no need, I think, to deal with that in detail; the capture of Vladivostok, the ensuing demonstration and the declaration of federation which you read in the press<sup>16</sup> the other day have proved and shown with the utmost clarity that no changes are necessary in this respect. The road we are on is absolutely clearly and well defined, and has ensured us success in face of all the countries of the world, although some of them are still prepared to declare that they refuse to sit at one table with us. Nevertheless, economic relations, followed by diplomatic relations, are improving, must improve, and certainly will improve. Every country which resists this risks being late, and, perhaps in some quite substantial things, it risks being at a disadvantage. All of us see this now, and not only from the press, from the newspapers. I think that in their trips abroad comrades are also finding the changes very great. In that respect, to use an old simile, we have not changed to other trains, or to other conveyances.

But as regards our home policy, the change we made in the spring of 1921, which was necessitated by such extremely powerful and convincing circumstances that no debates or disagreements arose among us about it—that change continues to cause us some difficulties, great difficulties, I would say. Not because we have any doubts about the need for the turn—no doubts exist in that respect—not because we have any doubts as to whether the test of our New Economic Policy has yielded the successes we expected. No doubts exist on that score—I can say this quite definitely—either in the ranks of our Party or in the ranks of the huge mass of non-Party workers and peasants.

In this sense the problem presents no difficulties. The difficulties we have stem from our being faced with a task whose solution very often requires the services of new people, extraordinary measures and extraordinary

methods. Doubts still exist among us as to whether this or that is correct. There are changes in one direction or another. And it should be said that both will continue for quite a long time. "The New Economic Policy!" A strange title. It was called a New Economic Policy because it turned things back. We are now retreating, going back, as it were; but we are doing so in order, after first retreating, to take a running start and make a bigger leap forward. It was on this condition alone that we retreated in pursuing our New Economic Policy. Where and how we must now regroup, adapt and reorganise in order to start a most stubborn offensive after our retreat, we do not yet know. To carry out all these operations properly we need, as the proverb says, to look not ten but a hundred times before we leap. We must do so in order to cope with the incredible difficulties we encounter in dealing with all our tasks and problems. You know perfectly well what sacrifices have been made to achieve what has been achieved; you know how long the Civil War has dragged on and what effort it has cost. Well now, the capture of Vladivostok has shown all of us (though Vladivostok is a long way off, it is after all one of our own towns) (*prolonged applause*) everybody's desire to join us, to join in our achievements. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic now stretches from here to there. This desire has rid us both of our civil enemies and of the foreign enemies who attacked us. I am referring to Japan.

We have won quite a definite diplomatic position, recognised by the whole world. All of you see it. You see its results, but how much time we needed to get it! We have now won the recognition of our rights by our enemies both in economic and in commercial policy. This is proved by the conclusion of trade agreements.

We can see why we, who eighteen months ago took the path of the so-called New Economic Policy, are finding it so incredibly difficult to advance along that path. We live in a country devastated so severely by war, knocked out of anything like the normal course of life, in a country that has suffered and endured so much, that willy-nilly we are beginning all our calculations with a very, very small percentage—the pre-war percentage. We apply this

yardstick to the conditions of our life, we sometimes do so very impatiently, heatedly, and always end up with the conviction that the difficulties are vast. The task we have set ourselves in this field seems all the more vast because we are comparing it with the state of affairs in any ordinary bourgeois country. We have set ourselves this task because we understood that it was no use expecting the wealthy powers to give us the assistance usually forthcoming under such circumstances.\* After the Civil War we have been subjected to very nearly a boycott, that is, we have been told that the economic ties that are customary and normal in the capitalist world will not be maintained in our case.

Over eighteen months have passed since we undertook the New Economic Policy, and even a longer period has passed since we concluded our first international treaty. Nonetheless, this boycott of us by all the bourgeoisie and all governments continues to be felt. We could not count on anything else when we adopted the new economic conditions; yet we had no doubt that we had to make the change and achieve success single-handed. The further we go, the clearer it becomes that any aid that may be rendered to us, that will be rendered to us by the capitalist powers, will, far from eliminating this condition, in all likelihood and in the overwhelming majority of cases intensify it, accentuate it still further. "Single-handed"—we told ourselves. "Single-handed"—we are told by almost every capitalist country with which we have concluded any deals, with which we have undertaken any engagements, with which we have begun any negotiations. And that is where the special difficulty lies. We must realise this difficulty. We have built up our own political system in more than three years of work, incredibly hard work

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\* In the verbatim report the text reads further: "and that even if we took into consideration the extremely high, say such-and-such a rate of interest, that is imposed in these circumstances on a country that, to use the accepted term, is rendered aid. Properly speaking, these rates of interest are very far from being aid. To put it bluntly, they would deserve a far less polite term than the word aid, but even these usual conditions would have been onerous for us."—Ed.

that was incredibly full of heroism. In the position in which we were till now we had no time to see whether we would smash something needlessly, no time to see whether there would be many sacrifices, because there were sacrifices enough, because the struggle which we then began (you know this perfectly well and there is no need to dwell on it) was a life-and-death struggle against the old social system, against which we fought to forge for ourselves a right to existence, to peaceful development. And we have won it. It is not we who say this, it is not the testimony of witnesses who may be accused of being partial to us. It is the testimony of witnesses who are in the camp of our enemies and who are naturally partial—not in our favour, however, but against us. These witnesses were in Denikin's camp. They directed the occupation. And we know that their partiality cost us very dear, cost us colossal destruction. We suffered all sorts of losses on their account, and lost values of all kinds, including the greatest of all values—human lives—on an incredibly large scale. Now we must scrutinise our tasks most carefully and understand that the main task will be not to give up our previous gains. We shall not give up a single one of our old gains. (*Applause.*) Yet we are also faced with an entirely new task; the old may prove a downright obstacle. To understand this task is most difficult. Yet it must be understood, so that we may learn how to work when, so to speak, it is necessary to turn ourselves inside out. I think, comrades, that these words and slogans are understandable, because for nearly a year, during my enforced absence, you have had in practice, handling the jobs on hand, to speak and think of this in various ways and on hundreds of occasions, and I am confident that your reflections on that score can only lead to one conclusion, namely, that today we must display still more of the flexibility which we employed till now in the Civil War.

We must not abandon the old. The series of concessions that adapt us to the capitalist powers is a series of concessions that enables them to make contact with us, ensures them a profit which is sometimes bigger, perhaps, than it should be. At the same time, we are conceding but a little part of the means of production, which are held

almost entirely by our state. The other day the papers discussed the concession proposed by the Englishman Urquhart, who has hitherto been against us almost throughout the Civil War. He used to say: "We shall achieve our aim in the Civil War against Russia, against the Russia that has dared to deprive us of this and of that." And after all that we had to enter into negotiations with him. We did not refuse them, we undertook them with the greatest joy, but we said: "Beg your pardon, but we shall not give up what we have won. Our Russia is so big, our economic potentialities are so numerous, and we feel justified in not rejecting your kind proposal, but we shall discuss it soberly, like businessmen." True, nothing came of our first talk, because we could not agree to his proposal for political reasons. We had to reject it. So long as the British did not entertain the possibility of our participating in the negotiations on the Straits, the Dardanelles, we had to reject it, but right after doing so we had to start examining the matter in substance. We discussed whether or not it was of advantage to us, whether we would profit from concluding this concession agreement, and if so, under what circumstances it would be profitable. We had to talk about the price. That, comrades, is what shows you clearly how much our present approach to problems should differ from our former approach. Formerly the Communist said: "I give my life", and it seemed very simple to him, although it was not always so simple. Now, however, we Communists face quite another task. We must now take all things into account, and each of you must learn to be prudent. We must calculate how, in the capitalist environment, we can ensure our existence, how we can profit by our enemies, who, of course, will bargain, who have never forgotten how to bargain and will bargain at our expense. We are not forgetting that either, and do not in the least imagine commercial people anywhere turning into lambs and, having turned into lambs, offering us blessings of all sorts for nothing. That does not happen, and we do not expect it, but count on the fact that we, who are accustomed to putting up a fight, will find a way out and prove capable of trading, and profiting, and emerging safely from difficult economic situations. That is a very

difficult task. That is the task we are working on now. I should like us to realise clearly how great is the abyss between the old and the new tasks. However great the abyss may be, we learned to manoeuvre during the war, and we must understand that the manoeuvre we now have to perform, in the midst of which we now are, is the most difficult one. But then it seems to be our last manoeuvre. We must test our strength in this field and prove that we have learned more than just the lessons of yesterday and do not just keep repeating the fundamentals. Nothing of the kind. We have begun to relearn, and shall relearn in such a way that we shall achieve definite and obvious success. And it is for the sake of this relearning, I think, that we must again firmly promise one another that under the name of the New Economic Policy we have turned back, but turned back in such a way as to surrender nothing of the new, and yet to give the capitalists such advantages as will compel any state, however hostile to us, to establish contacts and to deal with us. Comrade Krasin, who has had many talks with Urquhart, the head and backbone of the whole intervention, said that Urquhart, after all his attempts to foist the old system on us at all costs, throughout Russia, seated himself at the same table with him, with Krasin, and began asking: "What's the price? How much? For how many years?" (*Applause.*) This is still quite far from our concluding concession deals and thus entering into treaty relations that are perfectly precise and binding—from the viewpoint of bourgeois society—but we can already see that we are coming to it, have nearly come to it, but have not quite arrived. We must admit that, comrades, and not be swell-headed. We are still far from having fully achieved the things that will make us strong, self-reliant and calmly confident that no capitalist deals can frighten us, calmly confident that however difficult a deal may be we shall conclude it, we shall get to the bottom of it and settle it. That is why the work—both political and Party—that we have begun in this sphere must be continued, and that is why we must change from the old methods to entirely new ones.

We still have the old machinery, and our task now is to remould it along new lines. We cannot do so at once,

but we must see to it that the Communists we have are properly placed. What we need is that they, the Communists, should control the machinery they are assigned to, and not, as so often happens with us, that the machinery should control them. We should make no secret of it, and speak of it frankly. Such are the tasks and the difficulties that confront us—and that at a moment when we have set out on our practical path, when we must not approach socialism as if it were an icon painted in festive colours. We need to take the right direction, we need to see that everything is checked, that the masses, the entire population, check the path we follow and say: "Yes, this is better than the old system." That is the task we have set ourselves. Our Party, a little group of people in comparison with the country's total population, has tackled this job. This tiny nucleus has set itself the task of remaking everything, and it will do so. We have proved that this is no utopia but a cause which people live by. We have all seen this. This has already been done. We must remake things in such a way that the great majority of the masses, the peasants and workers, will say: "It is not you who praise yourselves, but we. We say that you have achieved splendid results, after which no intelligent person will ever dream of returning to the old." We have not reached that point yet. *That is why NEP remains the main, current, and all-embracing slogan of today.* We shall not forget a single one of the slogans we learned yesterday. We can say that quite calmly, without the slightest hesitation, say it to anybody, and every step we take demonstrates it. But we still have to adapt ourselves to the New Economic Policy. We must know how to overcome, to reduce to a definite minimum all its negative features, which there is no need to enumerate and which you know perfectly well. We must know how to arrange everything shrewdly. Our legislation gives us every opportunity to do so. Shall we be able to get things going properly? That is still far from being settled. We are making a study of things. Every issue of our Party newspaper offers you a dozen articles which tell you that at such-and-such a factory, owned by so-and-so, the rental terms are such-and-such, whereas at another, where our Communist comrade is the manager, the terms are such-

and-such. Does it yield a profit or not, does it pay its way or not? We have approached the very core of the everyday problems, and that is a tremendous achievement. Socialism is no longer a matter of the distant future, or an abstract picture, or an icon. Our opinion of icons is the same—a very bad one. We have brought socialism into everyday life and must here see how matters stand. That is the task of our day, the task of our epoch. Permit me to conclude by expressing confidence that difficult as this task may be, new as it may be compared with our previous task, and numerous as the difficulties may be that it entails, we shall all—not in a day, but in a few years—all of us together fulfil it whatever the cost, so that NEP Russia will become socialist Russia. (*Stormy, prolonged applause.*)

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November 21, 1922

*Collected Works*, Vol. 33,  
pp. 435-43



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> As an epigraph Lenin cites words from N. A. Nekrasov's poem *Who Lives Well in Russia*. p. 5
- <sup>2</sup> Reference is made to the Brest Peace, a plunderous peace forced on the young Soviet Republic in 1918 by imperialist Germany and its allies Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. It was signed at Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918.  
Following the revolution in Germany in November 1918, the Brest Peace was annulled by the Soviet Government. p. 6
- <sup>3</sup> Reference is to the Peasants' Mandate on the Land, which was drawn up on the basis of 242 local mandates and became a component of the Decree on Land adopted by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets on October 26 (November 8), 1917. p. 14
- <sup>4</sup> *Poor Peasants' Committees* (Kombedy) were inaugurated by decree of the All-Russia Central Committee dated June 11, 1918. The functions of the committees included, in keeping with the decree: distribution of grain, articles of prime necessity and agricultural implements; help to the local food supply organs in taking surplus grain from the kulaks and the rich. The decree stipulated privileges for the poor in the matter of grain and implements distribution.  
The Poor Peasants' Committees were strongpoints of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the countryside. They played a tremendous role in the struggle against the kulaks, in the redistribution of the confiscated land and in supplying the workers' centres and the Red Army with food.  
The formation of the committees was another stage of the socialist revolution in the countryside. They helped to consolidate Soviet rule in the villages and were of enormous significance in winning the middle peasant for Soviet power.  
By decision of the Sixth All-Russia Extraordinary Congress of Soviets (November, 1918) the Poor Peasants' Committees, having fulfilled their task, merged with the village Soviets. p. 16
- <sup>5</sup> Reference is to the counter-revolutionary revolt of the Czechoslovak Corps organised by the British and French imperialists with the active participation of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries.  
The Czechoslovak Corps was made up of the war prisoners and was formed by the Provisional Government in 1917 for action against the German Army. Following the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Russian counter-revolutionaries and British and French imperialists

used the counter-revolutionary officers of the corps to engineer an anti-Soviet revolt. It began in Chelyabinsk in May 1918, and with the aid of the Czechoslovak troops the counter-revolutionaries seized the rest of the Urals, the Volga area and subsequently, Siberia. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, acting under cover of the Czechoslovak forces, set up a government of whiteguards and Socialist-Revolutionaries in Samara and whiteguard government of Siberia in Omsk.

In October 1918, the Red Army liberated the Volga area; the counter-revolutionary Czechoslovak revolt was finally put down towards the close of 1919, when the Kolchak armies were routed. p. 18

- <sup>6</sup> Reference is made to a radio telegram addressed to "All Military Commissars, Military Commanders, Army Leaders, and Soviets", signed by V. I. Lenin and Y. M. Sverdlov in connection with the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany. p. 22

- <sup>7</sup> *Bednota*—a daily paper for peasants, first published on March 27, 1918. It appeared until January 31, 1931, after which date it merged with the newspaper *Sotsialisticheskoye Zemledeliye*. p. 30

- <sup>8</sup> Lenin has in mind the All-Russia Executive Committee of the Railwaymen's Trade Union (called Vikzhel after the Russian initial letters), of which the majority of members were Mensheviks or S. R.s. In the days immediately following the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Vikzhel pretended to be neutral, but actually was a hotbed of counter-revolution. The Vikzhel controlled the administrative machinery of the railways. By a decision of the delegates of the All-Russia Extraordinary Congress of Railway Clerks, Craftsmen and Workers, held in January 1918, the Vikzhel was abolished. p. 36

- <sup>9</sup> *The Smolny*, the building of the former Smolny Institute in Petrograd that was the official residence of the Soviet Government prior to its removal to Moscow in March 1918. p. 44

- <sup>10</sup> *The Independent Social-Democratic Party* of Germany was a "Centrist" party established in April 1917. At a congress held in Halle on October 12-17, 1920, the chief item discussed was that of the conditions of affiliation to the Communist International. After a bitter struggle a split took place in the party of "Independents", affiliation to the Communist International being decided on by 237 votes against 156. The Right-wing elements thereupon arranged a congress of their own, at which they elected an executive board and retained the Party's old name. The Left-wing of the "Independents" joined with the Communist Party of Germany (the so-called "Spartacists") to form the United Communist Party of Germany. p. 46

- <sup>11</sup> Reference is made to the so-called Two-and-a-Half International, which was founded in Vienna in February 1921 at a conference of "Centrist" parties and groups that, under pressure of the workers' revolutionary sentiments, had temporarily disaffiliated from the Second International. In 1923, the Two-and-a-Half International reaffiliated to the Second International. p. 53

- <sup>12</sup> *The Basle Manifesto of 1912* was the manifesto on war unanimously adopted by the Extraordinary Congress of the Second International held in Basle, November 24-25, 1912. The manifesto noted the

predatory aims of the imperialist war then in preparation, and called on the socialists of all countries to wage a resolute struggle against war. The Basle Manifesto repeated the points of the resolution of the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International held in 1907. Proposed by V. I. Lenin and R. Luxemburg that resolution stated that should an imperialist war break out socialists should use the economic and political crisis created by the war to prepare a socialist revolution.

The leaders of the Second International—Kautsky, Vandervelde and others—voted for the adoption of the manifesto, and when World War I broke out in 1914 they consigned the manifesto to oblivion and took the side of their respective imperialist governments.

p. 56

<sup>13</sup> Lenin has in mind his article entitled "‘Left-Wing’ Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality". (See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 323-54.)

p. 71

<sup>14</sup> The troops of the Far-Eastern Republic entered Vladivostok on October 25, 1922, liberating it, in co-operation with partisans, from the oppression of the whiteguards and the Japanese troops of occupation.

p. 76

<sup>15</sup> Lenin's speech at the plenary session of the Moscow Soviet, at which were present the deputies of all the district Soviets of Moscow city, was delivered in the evening of November 20, 1922. This was Lenin's last public speech.

p. 86

<sup>16</sup> Lenin has in mind the decision taken on November 14, 1922, by the People's Assembly of the Far-Eastern Republic to reunite with the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. A report of this appeared in the press on November 15, 1922.

p. 87



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В. И. ЛЕНИН  
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*на английском языке*